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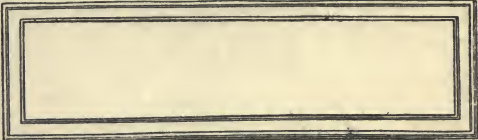
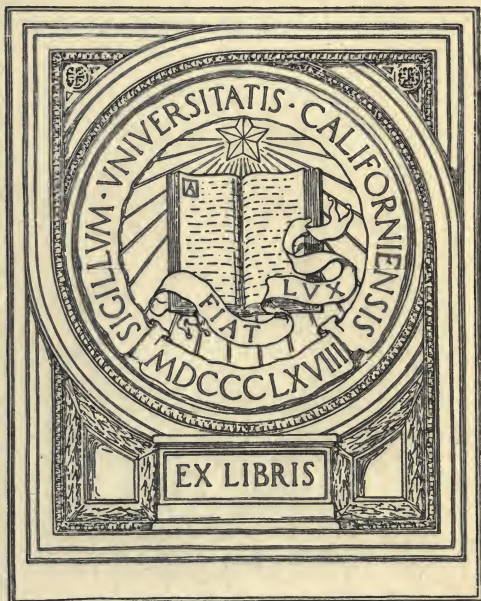
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The
Prophets
as
Statesmen
and
Preachers
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Fowler
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Advanced
Lessons

Sullivan Isaacson

GIFT OF
Gladys Isaacson

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Pilgrim Series
ADVANCED LESSONS

The Prophets
as
Statesmen and Preachers

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

By

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Preface

IN the present course of lessons, the effort is made to understand the life and work of Israel's great prophets in connection with the history of their times, and to show how their teachings developed with the changing conditions and needs of successive generations. This historical method of studying prophecy has the twofold advantage of giving vital interest to books that often seem remote from human life, and of avoiding many dangers of erroneous interpretation. Application of the prophetic teaching to our own day is made only after an attempt to understand what the prophet intended to teach his own generation; and then the application is often so plain that no thoughtful Christian can fail to make it for himself.

This second book in the "Pilgrim Series of Advanced Lessons" follows naturally after the more general study of "The Books of the Bible with Relation to their Place in History," yet the present course is complete in itself and may profitably be pursued by those who have not followed the earlier course. The lessons are arranged in two groups of twelve with a review following each group, so that the course offers one lesson a week for six months. If time permits, the final review may well be extended over two weeks, as indicated in the text.

All Biblical quotations in the lessons follow the translation of the Revised Version, American Standard Edition. A copy of this, or of the British¹ Revision, should be in the hands of every one following the present course of study. Some may prefer to read from the version of 1611, but constant reference should be made to the Revised Version for help in interpreting difficult passages.

The discussion of debatable questions is, as far as possible, excluded. Where it is necessary to speak upon some point on which scholars differ, the view which seems to have the preponderance of evidence in its favor is stated as probable, often with one or two of the most obvious reasons in its support. In all their positive statements, the lessons aim to present only that upon which most competent Biblical scholars are in agreement. The books suggested in the appendix contain discussions of all important problems of history and interpretation that will be apt to arise.

This little book is offered to advanced classes in the Sunday-school and other Bible students, in the hope that it may help some toward a better knowledge of the real course of divine revelation and a fuller appreciation of the Old Testament as a book of life.

The Prophets
as
Statesmen and Preachers

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The Prophets

as

Statesmen and Preachers

OUTLINE OF COURSE

INTRODUCTION

1. General classification of prophets.
2. Prophecy before the eighth century.

I. PROPHETS OF THE EIGHTH CENTURY

1. Amos.
2. Hosea.
3. Isaiah 1-39 (early ministry).
4. Isaiah 1-39 (later ministry).
5. Micah.

II. PROPHETS OF THE SEVENTH CENTURY

1. Zephaniah.
2. Jeremiah (first period).
3. Nahum.
4. Jeremiah (second period).
5. Habakkuk.
6. Jeremiah (third period).

III. PROPHETS OF THE EXILE AND RESTORATION

1. Ezekiel (first period).
2. Obadiah and prophecies of Ezekiel against foreign nations.

3. Ezekiel (second period). ✓

4. Isaiah 40-55. ✓

5. Haggai. 1

6. Zechariah.

7. Malachi.

8. Isaiah 56-66. ✓

IV. PROPHETS OF THE AGE OF LEGALISM

1. Joel.

2. Jonah.

3. Daniel 1-6. ✓

4. Daniel 7-12. ✓

The Prophets as Statesmen and Preachers

LESSON I

INTRODUCTION

I. GENERAL CLASSIFICATION OF PROPHETS

A reference in the book of Jeremiah distinguishes three classes of teachers in ancient Israel, the priests, the **Israel's Teachers** wise, and the prophets. Each of these contributed its portion to the thirty-nine books that compose our Old Testament. The conduct of formal worship, with the development and preservation of the many laws and customs controlling it, was the chief task of the priests. Even when they wrote their nation's history, their dominant purpose was evidently to emphasize its ritual aspects. The wise occupied themselves largely with observations upon the conduct of practical life and with problems concerning the divine government or the value of human life. Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes illustrate the various tendencies of their thought. It was through the prophets, chiefly, that the nature of God and his moral and spirit-

ual demands were revealed. They developed the ethical and spiritual religion of Israel.

In English, the words prophet and prophesy are used ordinarily in the meaning foreteller and foretell; but the Hebrew words that they represent in the Old Testament were not necessarily used in any such limited sense, and did not have such meaning in their origin. Abimelech was told that Abraham was a prophet whose prayer would be effective; here the word seems to mean one who enjoyed a peculiarly close relation with God. Indeed, the terms man of God and prophet are often used interchangeably. Still, this does not give us in full the Old Testament idea of the prophet, nor the exact root meaning of the word. When Moses objected that Pharaoh would not hearken to him, he was told that Aaron should be his prophet and should speak unto Pharaoh. This passage illustrates the probable root meaning of the word prophet, namely "speaker." When Jeremiah is made aware of his appointment as a prophet, his instant cry is, "Ah, Lord Jehovah! behold, I know not how to speak." When he and Isaiah and Ezekiel are called to the prophetic office, they are all commissioned to speak unto the people and the message assigned to them is not primarily, or exclusively, one of prediction of the unknown future. A careful historical study of the life work of each of Israel's great prophets will recognize a large element of foretelling, but will not find this, by any means, the chief thing in their messages. From every point of view one is forced to the conclusion that the Old Testament idea of

true prophecy included far more than prediction. The Hebrew prophet was God's spokesman, whether his message at the particular time concerned chiefly the past, present, or future. The Jews, themselves, denominate

Former Prophets the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings, the "Former Prophets," counting these writings that impress the lessons from Jehovah's past dealings with his people, the work of prophets as truly as the writings of Isaiah or Jeremiah. To these last two, together with Ezekiel and "the Twelve" they apply

Latter Prophets the caption "Latter Prophets," while Daniel is not included within their prophetic canon at all. This last fact, however, was probably due to the circumstance that the book was not written till the prophetic canon had been completed. While Daniel is very different from the earlier prophetic writings of Israel, it is the culmination of certain distinct tendencies that developed in the books of the prophetic canon.

It is common to speak of the prophets whose names are prefixed to separate books as the "writing prophets,"

Writing Prophets in distinction from those whom we know only from narratives in the historical books. The list of these latter is a long one, from Abraham and Moses, through Samuel, Nathan, Gad, and others less conspicuous, to Elijah and Elisha. The distinction that differentiates the writing prophets from these is a convenient one, though it may foster the error of supposing that the writing prophets necessarily wrote the books bearing their names. In some cases, it is highly probable that the prophets' disciples gathered together all

possible memorials, whether written or preserved only in the tablets of their hearts, and from these composed our existing books; again, one of the "latter prophets" is a narrative of which the prophet is the subject rather than the author.

The distinction between the "Major" and the "Minor Prophets" is another convenient one for purposes of reference, but one that is dangerous, in **Major and Minor Prophets** that it may lead to regarding the twelve shorter, or minor books, as necessarily of inferior significance; whereas, some of them stand in the very first rank in the development of Old Testament revelation. In the present course of study, this common distinction will be avoided.

II. PROPHECY BEFORE THE EIGHTH CENTURY

While Abraham is once called a prophet and Moses has this title given him several times, a passage in Samuel implies that the title was introduced in Israel at a comparatively late date. It must have been applied to these earlier men of God only by a later generation which recognized in them the spirit of the true prophet.

In the narratives concerning the days of Samuel, there appear groups of religious enthusiasts traveling about the country who are called "sons of the **Sons of the Prophets** prophets." They are prominent again, some two hundred years later, in the narratives concerning Elisha. From these enthusiasts, going about with music and song, or living together in a communal state, whose ecstatic practices suggest a very primitive type of

religion, to the great prophetic teachers of Israel, is a long step, indeed.) Samuel and Elisha appear, it is true, in connection with these companies, but the great Elijah stands forth as a lone figure, and, before the wondrous succession of Israel's writing prophets begins its work, these primitive companies disappear from the historical narratives. The earliest writing prophet denies that he has any connection, whatever, with such an order. These companies may have accomplished something for Israel, but the references to them give little help in the effort to trace the nourishing roots of later prophecy. It is not improbable that, like so many religious orders which were sincere in their early years, they became corrupt and were a source of the multitude of false prophets that swarmed in Israel, more truly than of the great writing prophets.

The picture of the prophet Nathan rebuking David for his great moral sin, contains some suggestion of the

Nathan work of Amos and Isaiah, but it is Elijah,
in the middle of the ninth century,
a hundred and fifty years after Nathan, who seems the
typical forerunner of the great statesmen-preachers of the
eighth century. His teaching would lead to a political

Elijah course upon which the later prophets in-
sisted with great unanimity, namely, com-
plete avoidance of foreign alliances. David sought
alliance, with no prophet rebuking him, but such con-
nections led, inevitably, in the next generation, to cor-
ruption of Jehovah worship through its intermingling
with the heathen practices of the national allies. In

Elijah's generation, the king had renewed Israel's ancient alliance with Phœnicia by marrying the Tyrian princess Jezebel, who proved an active propagator of her own religion. Elijah's great principle of jealousy for Jehovah came to its full expression in opposition to the influences for which Jezebel stood. The carrying out of this principle involved complete hostility to all political alliance with Israel's neighbors. The other great prophetic principle for which Elijah stands, is the recognition of the rights of the private citizen against the tyranny of the ruler. It was not on the occasion of Ahab's fostering of Baal worship, but of his conduct in the matter of Naboth's vineyard that Elijah announced the signal downfall of his dynasty. A study of the prophets, considered as statesmen and preachers, will show these principles of Elijah developing far beyond his presentation of them, taking new forms in the midst of new conditions and adding to themselves other teachings, till the combined body of prophetic truth reveals the foundation principles of all wise statesmanship, right morals, and true religion.

III. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN PREPARATION

Three classes of teachers in Israel (Jer. 18: 18); Abraham called a prophet (Gen. 20: 7); Aaron called prophet of Moses (Ex. 7: 1, 2); prophetic commissions of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel (Isa. 6: 5-13, Jer. 1: 4-10, Ezek. 2-3: 15); the early name for a prophet in Israel (1 Sam. 9: 9); sons of prophets (1 Sam. 10: 5, 10-12, 19: 18-24; 2 Kings 2: 3-7, 4: 1, 38-44, 5: 22, 6: 1-4, 9: 1-3); the work of Nathan (2 Sam. 12: 1-15); Elijah's fundamental principles (1 Kings 19: 14, 21: 17-24).

Chap. 18.
1 Kg 19 1-14

we see
first
elements of
prophecy

IV. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

Israel's classes of teachers and the distinctive functions of each ; meaning of the title "prophet" in Old Testament ; significance of the term "former prophets" ; the term "writing prophets" ; danger of misinterpretation of term "minor prophets" ; characteristics of "sons of the prophets" ; distinction between these and the great individual prophets ; special importance of narrative of Nathan ; the two great principles for which Elijah stood ; date of Elijah ; his interest in relation to the eighth century writing prophets ; his interest in relation to the age-long struggle for human liberty ; the political significance of his jealousy for Jehovah ; the religious significance of this principle for our own lives.

I. Prophets of the Eighth Century

LESSON II

AMOS

Suggestions for Review.—The three classes of teachers in Israel; meaning of the name “prophet” in Old Testament; application of the terms “former” and “latter prophets”; meaning of the term “writing prophets”; great principles for which Elijah stood; relation of his work to that of the prophets of later centuries.

I. THE PROPHET AND HIS WORK

Some twelve miles south of Jerusalem, on the crest of the central ridge of Palestine, lay Tekoa, where Amos dwelt. It was a high and desolate region from which the broken cliffs of the wilderness of Judæa descended precipitously to the Dead Sea. Here Amos was a herdsman tending a stunted variety of sheep, characteristic of the district, and caring for the sycomore figs that furnished a poor quality of food. While his occupation was of the humblest and he denied any connection with the professional prophets of his age, Amos was a man possessed of a power of eloquence, which combined astute appeals to men's interest and passion with logic inexorable, and one who expressed his thought with a wealth of illustration from history and nature. Yet these were but accessories of the prophet. To his intense, direct, absolutely sincere heart the secret of the ages had been laid open.

Amos lived during the long and exceedingly prosperous reign of Jeroboam II, and, probably, fulfilled his mission during the latter half of the reign,

The Times

when success had already been achieved by that monarch. His work was thus done about the middle of the eighth century B. C., approximately one hundred years later than the labors of his great forerunner Elijah, and nearly two centuries after the division of the kingdom under Rehoboam and Jeroboam I. Before the reign of Jeroboam II, Israel had suffered greatly from her protracted wars with Syria, but this ancient foe had, in turn, been almost annihilated by the Assyrian attack from the east, and the Hebrews had thus been able to recover the territory they had lost during their weakened condition. Thus, in the days of Jeroboam II, the combined territory of Israel and Judah compared favorably in extent with the kingdom of David and Solomon. In the book of Amos one may discover that this era of military success was also an age of great luxury and self-confidence, with their accompanying moral vices, especially, cruel oppression of the poor, perversion of justice for bribes, and dishonest business practices. The nation of Israel evidently regarded its prosperity as a mark of Jehovah's especial favor, and deemed it necessary only to maintain generous and elaborate ritual worship in order to retain his blessings.

In the midst of these conditions Amos appeared at Jeroboam's sanctuary at Beth-el and declared, in burning utterances, that Israel should suffer for her sins just as other nations: indeed, Je-

The Message

hovah's peculiar blessings upon her were but the ground of greater responsibility. If the people would turn from their acts of injustice, oppression, dishonesty, from their cruel and frivolous lives, the remnant might be saved; but Jehovah was about to raise up a nation to afflict Israel from whose oppression escape could not be found.

The mass of Israel clearly held the view common among Semitic peoples that their God was the god of the nation simply, whose especial favor was to be won by conformity to his ritual and whose satisfaction and prowess were shown when the nation was triumphant over its enemies. Amos flung back the curtain that veiled all eyes and revealed Jehovah of Israel as a God of justice. He introduced the epoch-making teaching that God demanded justice between nation and nation, man and man, rather than sacred assemblies and offerings, and that he would bring vengeance upon all nations, including his own people, because of their moral evils. Since the prophet's vision had pierced to the very nature of Jehovah, as no man's before had done, he alone was able to see that the nation's proud success was but the prelude of utter ruin, because beneath power and prosperity lay moral corruption. The preacher of righteousness was thus the enunciator to Israel and to the world of this eternal truth of statesmanship—the nation that persistently allows the selfish exploitation of its poor, perverts justice in its courts, corrupts its business system, is doomed to extinction. To-day, one may read the pages of the world's history writ full with the verification of Amos' political doctrine. With him it was based

on something deeper and more certain than human experience, however wide and unvarying. It followed inevitably from Amos' knowledge that a God of justice ruled the nations.

II. ANALYSIS OF LESSON

Preface.—1: 1, 2.

Opening Address.—1: 3-2.

Nations shall be punished for sins.—1: 3-2: 5.

Israel will fare similarly.—2: 6-16.

Discourses Expanding Indictment of Israel.—3-6.

First discourse.—3.

Second discourse.—4.

Third discourse.—5, 6.

Visions of Destruction.—7-9.

Locusts (7: 1-3); Fire (4-6); Plumbline (7-9); Historical statement (10-17); Summer fruit (8: 1-14); Jehovah by the altar (9: 1-6).

Epilogue.—9: 7-15.

Home Readings.—The above analysis will furnish a helpful outline for daily reading of Scripture and the entire prophecy may thus be read during the week by the expenditure of a few moments each day; or the following selections may be made: (1) 1: 3-15; (2) 2: 1-10; (3) 3: 1-8; (4) 4: 1-11; (5) 5: 1-11; (6) 5: 12-24; (7) 7: 7-17.

III. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN PREPARATION

Facts concerning the prophet (1: 1; 3: 7, 8; 7: 10-15); some Biblical references to Tekoa (2 Sam. 14: 2ff.; 23: 26; Nehemiah 3: 5, 27); the ruler of Israel (1: 1; 7: 10); prosperity of Israel (3: 12, 15; 5: 11; 6: 4-7; 2 Kings 14: 23-29); preceding calamities (4: 6-11; 2 Kings 13: 7); moral corruption (2: 6-8; 3: 9; 4: 1;

Amos 7: 1-17
Assisted by prophets

5: 11; 8: 4; 5: 12; 8: 5, 6; 2: 12; 5: 10); empty and idolatrous worship (3: 14; 4: 4-6; 5: 4, 5, 21-24; 8: 14); (self-confidence (6: 13; 9: 10); privileges and responsibilities (3: 1, 2); true means of securing divine favor (5: 14, 15, 22-24); impending doom (6: 7-14).

IV. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

The home and occupation of Amos; Amos' reason for preaching; probable date of ministry; political conditions of the time; indications of luxury at this period; principal moral vices attacked by the prophet; expressions of self-confidence attributed to the people by Amos; means used by the people to retain Jehovah's favor; Amos' doctrine of responsibility; true means of securing God's favor advocated by Amos; Amos' outlook for the future of his nation; some lessons from Amos for our nation, in reference to national privileges and responsibilities, to the public and private corruption connected with a time of prosperity, to confidence born of material prosperity; some lessons for our personal lives, in reference to the relative value of worship and moral conduct, to a layman's call to service by the needs of his day, to luxury versus consideration for the poor, to the vital necessity of a living sense that Jehovah is a God of justice and demands justice in his creatures.

LESSON III

HOSEA

Suggestions for Review.—The king under whom Amos lived; the date of Amos' preaching; the political condition of Israel; the moral condition; Amos' teaching in view of these conditions; the most prominent attribute of Jehovah in the teaching of Amos.

I. THE PROPHET AND HIS WORK

A greater contrast than that between the logical, inexorable preacher of divine justice and the next prophet of

The Man Israel could hardly be conceived. Hosea was "above all other prophets a man of deep affections, of a gentle, poetic nature." Like the prophecy of Amos, his message was delivered to northern Israel, but, unlike Amos, Hosea was probably himself of the northern tribes into whose misfortunes he entered with a tender sympathy impossible to one of the south; to him, their king, however unworthy, was "our king."

If the references of the first three chapters in the book are to be understood as actual reflections of Hosea's family experiences, we have intimate knowledge of his personal life in its tragic details. Many regard the story of wife and children as merely a parable, but, to a large number of scholars, it seems far more probable that Hosea actually found himself wedded to one who could neither comprehend nor value his singleness of love and devotion and that, through the tragedy of his

private life, he was prepared for his prophetic work. As he looked back, after many years, and saw how he had been led through suffering to the light, he came to feel that it had all been a part of the divine plan for his life mission. If this explanation be the true one, then Hosea, like Isaiah, gave to his children names that made them continual prophecies to their generation.

The opening chapters of Hosea belong to the reign of Jeroboam II and may be but a very few years later than the sermons of Amos. The latter part of

The Times the book (chapters 4-14) seems clearly to reflect the years of anarchy that followed the death of Jeroboam, whose son sat upon the throne but six months before the blood of Jezreel was avenged upon the house of Jehu (Hosea 1:4). The assassin ruled but a month and was, in turn, deposed by Menahem. This ruler was forced to pay heavy tribute to Assyria. After a short reign Menahem died and his son had ruled little more than one year when Pekah, the general of the army, seized the throne. In alliance with Damascus, the new ruler attacked Ahaz of Judah, probably seeking to force him into a coalition against Assyria. Ahaz, in alarm, appealed to Assyria whose king came in reponse and depopulated the northern and northeastern districts of Israel. The last of Hosea's messages probably antedates by a short time these fatal complications, and thus belongs more than a dozen years before the complete overthrow of northern Israel. During the proud reign of

The Message Jeroboam, Hosea gave his eldest son the fateful name Jezreel, significant of the

bloody doom soon to fall upon the royal house, as it had fallen at Jezreel upon the house of Ahab through the founder of Jeroboam's dynasty. Two other children were born to the prophet, in the same reign, to whom names were given declaring the coming end of divine favor and national disinheritance. Like Amos, Hosea saw the years of national aggrandizement pregnant with impending ruin. His vision, however, is not so prominently one of devastation through a foreign foe, but rather that of spiritual separation between God and faithless Israel, who has preferred the sensual gods of Canaan before the pure worship of Jehovah.

Through the gloom of Hosea's oracles there break again and again bright rays of glory in the supreme faith of the husband who loves the erring wife and will buy her back to himself when she has fallen to lowest depths; faith that the unquenchable love of Jehovah must win his people back after a long period of chastening.

In the succeeding chapters one feels that the national ruin had already begun when the words were uttered. The succession of weak monarchs had come. They looked now to Egypt and now to Assyria for help and knew not whither to turn. Priests were as corrupt as usurping monarchs. Treachery, whoredom, bloodshed, idolatry were everywhere. The nation must become vassal to Assyria, yet Jehovah's love could not be killed as that of a man might be:—"I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger . . . for I am God, and not man."

II. ANALYSIS OF LESSON

Title.—1: 1.

Israel, the Faithless Wife.—1: 2-3.

Hosea's unhappy marriage and the prophetic names of his children.—1: 2-2: 1.

Punishment followed by reconciliation.—2: 2-23.

Love to unfaithful wife the type of Jehovah's love to Israel.—3.

Discourses upon the Faithlessness of Israel and the Faithfulness of Jehovah.—4-14.

Rejection of knowledge.—4-6: 3.

Internal anarchy and weak foreign policy.—6: 4-7.

Exile in Egypt and Assyria.—8-9: 9.

Innocent Israel corrupted.—9: 10-13.

Return and blessing.—14.

Home Readings.—The above analysis will furnish a helpful outline for daily reading of Scripture. From three to five minutes each day of the week will suffice for a careful reading of the entire prophecy; or, the following selections may be made: (1) 1: 2-2: 1; (2) 2: 2-23; (3) 4; (4) 6: 4-7: 3; (5) 9: 1-9; (6) 11: 1-11; (7) 14.

III. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN PREPARATION

The marriage and children (1: 3-6, 8, 9; 2: 2, 5; 3: 1-4); Hosea a prophet before fall of house of Jehu (1: 4); usurpations and national weakness after death of Jeroboam II (2 Kings 15: 8-14, 19, 20, 24, 25, 29, 30); Hosea preaches after fall of house of Jehu (5: 13; 7: 7, 11; 8: 4); moral corruption of priests, princes and people (4: 1, 2; 6: 9; 7: 3-7); lack of knowledge of God (4: 1, 6); coming doom (3: 4; 8: 1; 9: 3); the unquenchable love of Jehovah (2: 16, 23; 4: 4, 5; 11: 9); Jehovah's supreme requirement (6: 4-6); hope for Israel (3: 5; 11: 9; 13: 14; 14: 4, 5).

IV. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

The temperament of Hosea compared with that of Amos ; Hosea's nationality ; two interpretations of the narrative in chs. 1-3 ; the significance of the names ascribed to Hosea's children ; the date of the opening chapters of Hosea ; the national conditions reflected in the later sermons ; the moral and religious condition of Israel as seen by Hosea ; Hosea's emphasis upon knowledge of God ; the ground of the prophet's certainty of coming judgment ; Hosea's pictures of Jehovah's love, man's duty to a God of love ; the ground of Hosea's hope in the midst of ruin and despair ; does the love that Hosea preaches exclude justice ? is the message of Amos or Hosea complete without that of the other ? human suffering as a means of leading one to knowledge of God ; foreglimpses of the gospel message in Hosea ; the vital necessity for our Christian lives of a vivid realization that the God of justice is all-loving too.

LESSON IV

ISAIAH 1-39 (Early Ministry)

Suggestions for Review.—The political conditions of Israel during Hosea's ministry; the moral and religious conditions; Hosea's teaching in view of these conditions; the attribute of God most emphasized in Hosea's teaching.

I. THE PROPHET AND HIS WORK

As we turn to consider the next member of Israel's company of writing prophets, we pass from the corrupt and disintegrating kingdom of the north to the capital of the small, but compact and more stable kingdom of Judah. **The Man** Isaiah fulfilled his mission chiefly, if not exclusively, in Jerusalem itself. Various slight indications of his prominence in governmental affairs under successive monarchs have led to the inference that he was probably of noble birth.

Historical allusions in his various discourses clearly indicate that Isaiah's ministry extended throughout fully thirty-five years; Jewish tradition would include at least fifteen years more. In the present lesson only those prophecies which can, with some probability, be ascribed to the first fifteen years of the public ministry are included. From these it may be learned that the prophet was married and had two sons to whom names were given that emphasized the prophet's message of doom and of hope for a remnant. In the record of Isaiah's inaugural vision (ch. 6) the soul experience of the

prophet is wonderfully revealed. It is the consciousness of the exaltation of Jehovah, before whom the shining ones veil their faces and cry "Holy, holy," and of the moral debasement of the people that leads the prophet to cry out "Here am I; send me." But first, the vision of God had brought a sense of his own uncleanness and it was only after the symbolic coal from the altar had touched and purified his own lips that he was ready to become a messenger. In one of the first public scenes of Isaiah's ministry, he appears as the calm, confident, adviser of his timorous, faithless monarch, Ahaz. Throughout the great political crises in which he appears again and again, striving to direct rulers and people in a course that will preserve the national independence, he is seen always as a balanced, wise statesman.

Amos strove to bring to repentance a prosperous but corrupt people whose ultimate doom was inevitable.

The Times Hosea began his ministry in the face of similar conditions, but lived to see the beginning of the end for the people whom he loved. With his last message of mingled hope and despair the voice of prophecy became silent in the fated northern kingdom. Little more than a dozen years later, Israel ceased to be a nation; its capital was destroyed and multitudes of its people were deported by the Assyrian monarch, while heathen tribes, conquered elsewhere, were in time settled upon the fruitful hills of Ephraim.

Hosea's voice was hardly hushed when the torch of true prophecy was caught up by Isaiah, in Jerusalem.

In large measure through his influence, the southern kingdom was guided through the dark years when her sister fell. It was a year or two before northern Israel and Syria united in their attack upon Judah that Isaiah dates his call to the prophetic office, and it was in connection with that crisis that he appeared counseling Ahaz to trust in Jehovah and not call in the aid of Assyria. The failure of Ahaz to heed Isaiah at this time led directly to the first deportation from Israel in 734 B. C. and to the Assyrian suzerainty over Samaria itself. The other great national crises during Isaiah's ministry will be considered in the next study.

✓ Amos had preached the judgment of a just God upon the unjust. ✓ Hosea had shown the dark veil of separation

The
Message

between a loving God and an utterly insensible, light and faithless people. In the wonderful first chapter of Isaiah, which may be one of his earliest, the truth of both Amos and Hosea is reiterated with the brilliance and wealth of literary and oratorical power which makes Isaiah *facile princeps* among the princely orators and writers of Israel. In the next four chapters we have sermons that may still antedate the crisis of 734 and which contain Isaiah's own characteristic teachings of the wondrous exaltation of the holy God of Israel and of a glorious future for a holy remnant of his people together with the great teaching that Israel's religion shall spread among the nations and bring in universal peace. The following chapter is the record of the inaugural vision. Other messages that may be assigned to the earlier years of ministry show

Isaiah now seeking to persuade Ahaz that safety lies in Jehovah and not in help from Assyria; now picturing in mournful lyric utterance the coming collapse of the northern kingdom, fruit of its moral and social disintegration; now warning Jerusalem herself that she, too, is guilty.

II. ANALYSIS OF LESSON

NOTE.—The prophecies of Isaiah are not arranged in chronological order. The fact that the inaugural vision is not at the beginning is the most obvious indication of this. The entire book was probably a gradual compilation in which various influences determined the exact order of the addresses, poems and narratives that make up the whole.

The portions included in the present study are:

The "Great Arraignment."—1.

Judgment coming upon Judah, yet hope for the Remnant and for Israel's Religion.—2-5.

Inaugural Vision.—6.

The Syro-Ephraimitish War of 735-734.—7-9: 7.

The Downfall of Ephraim.—9: 8; 10: 4.

The Downfall of Syria and Ephraim.—17: 1-11.

Judah Corrupt like Northern Israel.—28.

Home Readings.—The above analysis will furnish a helpful outline for daily reading of Scripture. If time does not permit the reading of the entire passages the following selections may be made: (1) 1; (2) 5: 1-24; (3) 6; (4) 7: 1-17; (5) 9: 8-10: 4; (6) 17: 1-11; (7) 28.

III. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN PREPARATION

Time of Isaiah's call (6: 1); Isaiah's sons (7: 3; 8: 1-4); influence of the vision of the exalted God (6: 5); symbolic purifica-

tion (6: 6, 7); the prophetic commission (6: 8-10); Isaiah and Ahaz (7: 3-9; 2 Kings 16: 5-8); the first deportation from Israel (2 Kings 15: 29); an Amos come to judgment (1: 10-17); an Hosea pleading (1: 2-5); Isaiah's glorious hope (2: 2-4); ground of Ephraim's doom (10: 1-4); Jerusalem guilty like Ephraim (28: 7, 14); Isaiah's doctrine of a remnant (4: 2-4; 6: 13; 7: 3; 17: 4-6; 28: 5); the chief attributes of Jehovah emphasized by Isaiah (1: 4; 2: 17; 5: 16; 6: 1-4).

IV. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

Change of scene of prophetic activity after Hosea; length of Isaiah's ministry; the twofold message in names of Isaiah's sons; the motive that led Isaiah to his prophetic ministry; his sense of unworthiness and its removal; the contrast in the national policy of Isaiah and Ahaz and the reason for the difference; the direct result of Ahaz's calling on Assyria for help; Isaiah's expectation as to the future of the religion of Jehovah and its influence in the world; Isaiah's view as to the moral condition of Israel and Judah; his doctrine of a remnant; the chief attributes of Jehovah as revealed by Isaiah; do the teachings of Amos, Hosea and Isaiah when combined give all the essential attributes of the Christian conception of God? is there anything more fundamental and vital in the religion of ancient prophet or modern Christian than one's conception of the nature of God? does Isaiah's prophetic call contain any essential motives that may not be just as real for a Christian worker to-day? do Amos, Hosea and Isaiah lay much stress upon religious forms as essential in a life conformed to Jehovah's will? upon what do they lay the most stress? did the conditions of their age lead to a one-sided teaching as to God's will that needs supplementing in other times, *e. g.*, our own day?

LESSON V

ISAIAH 1-39 (Later Ministry)

Suggestions for Review.—Time and place of Isaiah's ministry; his call to the prophetic office; the first great national crisis in which Isaiah advised the king; some of Isaiah's characteristic teachings.

I. THE PROPHET AND HIS WORK

The calm trust of Isaiah in the God of Israel, that shone in such strong contrast to the attitude of Ahaz

The Man when that king called in the aid of Assyria, appeared even more conspicuously in later crises. The prophet ever protested against seeking help in foreign alliance, as Elijah had done in the preceding century. In the days of Ahaz he denounced alliance with Assyria for defense against Israel and Syria; after these nations had fallen, he opposed alliance with Egypt for defense against Assyria. Trust in the God of Israel for protection and keep free from entangling alliances was the national policy of Isaiah; yet when coalition had been made with Egypt and had brought Jerusalem to the verge of ruin, Isaiah alone was confident, resting in perfect assurance that Jehovah would fight as a lion against the foe, and hover as a bird with protecting wings above his city.

The prophet used every possible means to impress his convictions upon his countrymen. Now he begins a lilt-
ing song of love that soon proves a parable of judgment (5: 1-7), or again, he hymns a solemn dirge "for the

destruction of the daughter of my people" (22: 1-14). His sermons are resplendent with wonderful imagery, but some in Jerusalem are deaf to song and sermon. For such his sons are made perpetual prophecies by the significant names given them, or the great prophet himself condescends to become a visible message, going about for three years in the garb of a slave to declare the coming captivity of Egypt (20). In the nineteenth chapter, however, the breadth of this prophet's outlook is seen in his picturing of the despised ally, Egypt, and the dreaded scourge, Assyria, as future worshipers with Israel.

The prevision of Amos, Hosea and Isaiah was fulfilled in the complete downfall of northern Israel (721 B. C.).

The Times

The fate of the larger portion of ancient Israel must have shaken the little southern kingdom from center to circumference. Two years later, the Assyrian armies marched past the foot of Judah's hills and defeated the Egyptians in a battle on the borders of their land. Some nine years later the Philistine town of Ashdod revolted from Assyria, only to be speedily subdued. It was at this time that Isaiah gave his object-lesson to convince the people that Egypt, which was constantly fomenting rebellions in Palestine, would herself be utterly overcome by Assyria. On this expedition the Assyrian king accepted presents from Judah, Edom and Moab. With the death of the dreaded conqueror, six years later, revolts broke out and the regions of Palestine were roused to throw off the yoke. Isaiah was powerless to prevent Judah from joining her neighbors. The new Assyrian king was, at first, fully occupied with quelling

revolts in the eastern parts of his vast domains. At last he was free to turn his attention to the western regions and was soon victorious almost to the borders of Egypt. Judæa was devastated and multitudes of captives were carried off. Jerusalem stood only until the main force of the Assyrians might undertake its regular siege, when, suddenly, destruction came upon the Assyrian hosts. The Biblical historian tells us that the angel of the Lord went forth and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred fourscore and five thousand. . . . So Sennacherib, king of Assyria, departed and went and returned and dwelt at Nineveh. An obscure statement in Herodotus (II, 141) has led many to believe that the instrument of destruction was a pestilence breaking out in the army as it lay in the swampy district at the border of Egypt.

Isaiah was keenly alive to the great movements of empires which characterized his age. In the midst of these

The Message he sought to guide the kingdom of Judah in the safest course. With his eye fixed

thus upon the affairs of the great contending empires of Egypt and Assyria or upon the plots and counterplots of Judah's more immediate neighbors, his heart and message centered on Judah and her religion. To his enlightened vision Jehovah was the God of nations, who might use proud Assyria for the rod of his anger, but before whom Assyria and Egypt alike would finally come to worship. The teaching that a remnant of the people would be spared from Jehovah's judgment is reiterated in Isaiah's later preaching, but in his various prophecies

that seem to center about the years 702-1, the teaching that the sacred city itself would be spared is more prominent. The pictures of the remote and ideal future given at this time of incompetent rule and of war; present the figure of a prince of the house of David upon whom the spirit of the Lord shall rest, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, and hope for an age when the work of righteousness shall be peace.

II. ANALYSIS OF LESSON

The portions of Isaiah 1-39 included in the present study are:
The Assyrian scourge; its destruction.

A Reign of Peace.—10: 5-11: 9.

Coming Overthrow of Assyrian Army.—14: 24-27.

Philistia to be Destroyed by Assyria.—14: 28-32.

A Fragment, referring, probably, to Assyria.—17: 12-14.

Ethiopia seeks Alliance.—18.

Egypt's coming Humiliation, Ultimate Union of Egypt and Assyria in Worship with Judah.—19.

Coming Captivity of Egypt and Ethiopia.—20.

Oracles concerning Edom and Arabia.—21: 11-17.

Lament over Conduct of Citizens of Jerusalem.—22: 1-14.

Rebuke of Shebna, the treasurer.—22: 15-25.

Coming Fall of Tyre, Ultimate Worship of Jehovah.—23.

Coming Siege and Deliverance, Futility of Aid from Egypt,

Future Age of Righteousness and Peace.—29-32.

Speedy Deliverance from Assyria.—33.

NOTE.—The above sections, together with those given in the preceding study, include practically all the material of which the original authorship can with much confidence be ascribed to Isaiah. Chapters 36-39 give an account of the crisis of 701 almost identical with 2 Kings 18: 13-20: 19.

Home Readings.—The following selections are made from the above passages as giving typical examples of Isaiah's work and teaching after 722 B. C.: (1) 10: 5-34; (2) 11: 1-9; (3) 14: 24-27; 17: 12-14; (4) 19; (5) 22: 15-25; (6) 30; (7) 32: 1-8; 15-18.

III. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN PREPARATION

Isaiah's attitude toward foreign alliance (20: 4-6; 30: 1-7, 15-17; 31: 1-6, cf. interview with Ahaz 7); Isaiah's resources in teaching—lyric poems (5: 1-7; 22: 1-14), figures and illustrations (1: 3, 5, 8, 9, 18; 3: 4, 15; 5: 24; 11: 6-9; 17: 6; 29: 8; 31: 4, 5; 32: 2, etc.), symbolic acts (20), pleading (1: 18), stern rebuke (1: 10-17; 5: 8, etc.); catholicity of hope (19: 23-25); the great deliverance of 701 (37: 33-38); inviolability of Zion (10: 24-34; 14: 24-27, 32; 29: 1-8; 31: 4, 5); the ideal prince (11: 1-9; 32: 1-8); future of peace (32: 15-18).

IV. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

Isaiah's foreign policy; the source of the prophet's confidence in national crises; Isaiah's resources as a teacher and preacher; the universality of his hope; the struggle of empires in Isaiah's day; the fate of Sennacherib's hosts in 701 B. C.; Isaiah's faith as to Jerusalem; features of Isaiah's hope for Israel's future; elements of the gospel message in Isaiah 1-39; Isaiah as a man of his times; lessons for all times in Isaiah's teaching on patriotism, in his faith, breadth of view, hope.

LESSON VI 1

MICAH

Suggestions for Review.—Great national events in last twenty years of Isaiah's ministry; Isaiah's political activity; Isaiah's gifts as a teacher; Isaiah's most striking personal characteristics.

I. THE PROPHET AND HIS WORK

Micah is commonly spoken of as a "younger contemporary of Isaiah." He seems to have begun his preach-

The Man

ing at about the time of the fall of Samaria, the capital of northern Israel. Jeremiah

quotes Micah (3 : 12) and regards this message as the immediate cause of Hezekiah's reform. As this reform must have occurred some years after the fall of Samaria, it seems pretty clear that Micah's ministry lasted for a number of years. It is generally agreed, further, that the last two chapters cannot be earlier than the reign of Manasseh. Hence, if they are the work of Micah at all, his ministry must have extended well into the seventh century. Isaiah and Micah give us two most interesting supplementary views of the closing decades of the eighth century. In the one, the age is seen from the point of view of the capital and international relations are prominent; in the other, the view-point is that of the outlying rural districts where the high politics of the capital make little direct impression. The gross oppression by the upper classes, the perversion of justice through bribery, and the

corruption of religion are seen from beneath where they grind the common people. Micah, living in a little town, on the border between Judæa and Philistia, speaks as representative of the common people, while Isaiah attacks the vices of his age from the social level of the rich and oppressive rulers.

Isaiah did not hesitate to picture with all the power of his brilliant rhetoric the pride and luxury of the wealthy

The Times whom he saw in Jerusalem, but it is from

Micah that we learn how the oppression by the rich really affected the poor. To him, it seemed that the rulers plucked the skin from off the people and their flesh from off their bones. He accuses the heads of Jerusalem of judging for reward and the priests of teaching for hire and the prophets of divining for money. He sees the land full of divination, sorcery and idolatry, and yet the people are confident that Jehovah is in their midst as were the inhabitants of the sister kingdom in Amos' day.

The closing chapters of the book, like the later sermons of Hosea in northern Israel, show a desperate condition of the nation; oppression, persecution and corruption of justice are crowned by a very dissolution of the ties of society; friendship, wedded and filial love are hardly known—"all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net."

The word of Micah is one of judgment upon Samaria and Judah because of the vices of rulers, priests

The Message

and prophets. Zion, for their sake, shall be plowed as a field, yea, the sacred

city shall become heaps. In the earlier part of the prophecy the avowed purpose is to "declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin." The message was so effective that, a century later, it was recalled as an example of the right influence of a prophet upon a ruler. The message of doom is followed in chapters 4 and 5 by pictures of the establishment of Zion in peace, the coming of a ruler who shall be the peace of Israel when the Assyrian shall come into the land, and the destruction of worship in the high places. In chapter 6, there is given a wonderful summary of the combined teaching of Amos, Hosea and Isaiah regarding the life demanded by the God of Israel and the comparative worthlessness of sacrifice—"What doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

II. ANALYSIS OF LESSON

Title.—1: 1.

Doom of Samaria and Jerusalem.—1: 2-3.

Advent of Jehovah in judgment.—1: 2-16.

Rebellion against Jehovah.—2: 1-11.

(Disconnected expression of hope).—2: 12, 13.

Sins of rulers, priests and prophets.—3.

Hope for Future.—4, 5.

Restoration of Zion.—4: 1-8.

Future triumph over enemies.—4: 9-5: 1.

Coming age of peace and true worship.—5: 2-15.

Dramatic Presentation of Israel's Relations to Jehovah.—6, 7.

The case of Jehovah against Israel.—6: 1-7: 6.

Israel and the prophet.—7: 7-20.

Home Readings.—With the above analysis in mind, the little book of Micah should be read in its entirety. It may be apportioned to the days of the week, as follows: (1) 1; (2) 2; (3) 3; (4) 4: 1-5: 1; (5) 5: 2-15; (6) 6: 1-7: 6; (7) 7: 7-20.

III. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN PREPARATION

Date of Micah's preaching (1: 6; 3: 12; cf. Jer. 26: 17, 18; 6: 10, 11, 16; 7: 2, 3, 5, 6 thought to show the effects of "cold biting wind which King Manasseh brought over Judah" cf. 2 Kings 21: 1-9); home of Micah (1: 1, 14), (1: 10-14 places named seem to be on borderland of Judæa and Philistia); oppression by rich and powerful (2: 2; 3: 1-3, 10); bribery (3: 9, 11); priests and prophets mercenary (3: 5, 11); heathenish sorceries (3: 7; 5: 12); idolatry (5: 13, 14); false confidence (3: 11); judgment on Samaria (1: 6, 7); on Jerusalem (3: 12); effect of Micah's message (Jer. 26: 17-19); coming reign of peace (4: 3, 4; 5: 2-5); future destruction of heathen practices (5: 12-14); Jehovah's requirements (6: 6-8).

IV. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

Date of Micah relative to Isaiah; earliest possible date for chs. 6, 7; difference in point of view of Isaiah and Micah; different classes whose conduct is attacked by Micah; characteristic sins of each class; false confidence of Judah pictured by Micah, compared with that of Israel in Amos' day; dark elements of picture in chs. 6, 7; Micah's expectation for the future of Samaria and Jerusalem in chs. 1-3; outlook for the future in chs. 4, 5; tradition of Micah's influence a century after his ministry; the idea of God's requirements taught by Amos, by Hosea, by Isaiah; the combination of these in Micah 6; the conception of God the determining principle in a prophet's message; Micah's practical lessons for our day; morality versus ritual in the prophets of the eighth century; elements of a spiritual religion taught by these prophets.

II. Prophets of the Seventh Century

LESSON VII

ZEPHANIAH

Suggestions for Review.—Time and place of Micah's ministry ; social conditions of Judah as seen by Micah ; judgments threatened by Micah ; hope for future ; the threefold demand of Jehovah.

I. THE PROPHET AND HIS WORK

The latter half of the eighth century B. C. must ever remain memorable as the era of the great ethical prophets, formative spirits in the religion of Israel, who revealed the requirements of a God of justice, mercy and holiness, who saw both the social life of their age and the strife of contending nations in the pure, white light of the righteous God of nations. Many providential forces united to produce these statesmen-preachers, but the most obvious of the external influences are the corruption of their own people and the movements of the nations in which they saw the working out of divine judgment.

It is the latter half, almost the last quarter of the next century, before the voice of prophecy again breaks on the ear. Then we find another group of four raising the old trumpet cry with some new tones, unheard by the earlier age. The first of these, it would seem, was Zephaniah. The name means "whom Jehovah hides"

and suggests that the child may have been born in the terrible days of Manasseh's reign, when those who were loyal to the God of Israel needed to be hidden from the persecution of the dominant heathen party. The prophet's ancestry is traced back for four generations to Hezekiah. Slight indications lead to the inference that this Hezekiah was the king who had hearkened to Isaiah and Micah and had instituted a reform in Israel's worship. If this be the case, and if Zephaniah uttered his first prophetic message about the year 626, he must have been a young man connected with the royal line of the young reigning king, Josiah. The intensity of the prophet's message accords well with this inference as to his age.

The generations from Hezekiah to Josiah and Zephaniah were a dark period for the religion of Jehovah.

The Times Manasseh's half-century of rule was a time of great reaction from the partial reform under Hezekiah. Assyria was politically dominant over Judah, which paid tribute of money and tribute of servile imitation, introducing every foreign fashion of heathen worship. Amon, unworthy son of unworthy father, was cut off after two years of rule; then the people rose, put to death the conspirators and made Amon's young son, Josiah, king. Before the year 626 the boy of eight had reached the full age of manhood and had become the actual head of the nation. The heavy hand of Assyria had now been withdrawn, or had come to rest very lightly upon Judah, for that blood-stained monarchy was ready to totter to its fall. The face of all

southwestern Asia to the borders of Egypt was being swept by hordes of Scythian invaders from beyond the Caucasus. Into Palestine, across the plain of Esdraelon, over the passes of Carmel, and through the Philistine territory, they passed on toward Egypt. Thence they were turned back, we read, by the force of rich presents from the Pharaoh. The hills of Judæa protected their inhabitants from this invasion of horsemen ; but the devastation that they left in the neighboring lowlands must have deeply affected the heart of the nation. Zephaniah's language probably reflects the impression produced. It would seem, indeed, that this awe-inspiring invasion formed, in part, the immediate occasion for unsealing the lips of prophecy, as the terrible advance of Assyria had done in the previous century. The other condition of the earlier century was present, too, and was certainly influential in leading Zephaniah to utter his warning cry. The remnant of Baal and those that worshiped the host of heaven upon the housetops had not yet been swept away by the great reform instituted later in Josiah's reign. There were those in Judah who had turned back from following Jehovah, and those who had not sought him. A fatal indifference had settled upon the citizens of Jerusalem, who had concluded that Jehovah would neither do good nor do evil. Jerusalem was rebellious and corrupt. Her princes in the midst of her were roaring lions ; her judges were evening wolves ; her prophets were light and treacherous ; her priests had profaned the sanctuary.

The prophecy of Zephaniah opens with the threat that

Jehovah will consume all things from off the face of the earth, man and beast alike. The day of

The Message the Lord is at hand, a day of judgment when those who have introduced the customs of heathen nations into Judah shall be punished, and those who are indifferent to Jehovah shall be searched out. The threat of Amos that those who build houses shall not dwell in them and those who plant vineyards shall not eat their fruit is reiterated. The second chapter is a doom-song upon the nations, followed in the opening of the third by the doom of polluted Jerusalem. This leads on to a rather somber picture of hope when the remnant, poor and afflicted, shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies, and shall dwell in security.

The book closes with a joyous song of triumph, much in the spirit of those that are connected with the end of the Babylonian exile. It is very commonly held that this song was composed at that time, when Zephaniah's expectation had at last been fulfilled and a remnant had survived, an afflicted and poor people, but trusting now in Jehovah alone.

II. ANALYSIS OF LESSON

Title.—1 : 1.

The Day of the Lord upon Judah.—1 : 2-18.

The Day of the Lord upon the Nations and Judah.—2 : 1-3 : 8.

The Purified Remnant.—3 : 9-13.

Jehovah in the Midst of Zion (a lyric).—3 : 14-20.

Home Readings.—(1) 1; (2) 2; (3) 3 : 1-8; (4) 3 : 9-13; (5) 3 : 14-20; (6) 2 Kings 21; (7) 2 Kings 23 : 1-14.

III. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN PREPARATION

Character of Manasseh's reign (2 Kings 21: 1-9); Zephaniah's ancestry (1: 1); possible reflections of Scythian invasion in Zephaniah's pictures (1: 2, 3, 7b, 13, 16, 17b); religious condition of Judah, (1: 4-6, 12; 3: 2, 4); civil corruption (3: 3); foreign customs (1: 8); the day of the Lord, a day of wrath (1: 7, 14-16); hope for the remnant (3: 12, 13); the restored exiles (3: 15-17, 20).

IV. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

Influences that called forth prophets of eighth century; partial reproduction of conditions in seventh century; significance of name Zephaniah; Zephaniah's probable descent; religious condition of Judah in years intervening between eighth and seventh century prophets; political status of Judah in Manasseh's reign; condition of Assyria when Zephaniah began mission; the social and religious condition of Judah in early years of Josiah as seen by Zephaniah; the day of the Lord as pictured in Zephaniah; the hope of Zephaniah for the doomed people; probable occasion of the song at close of prophecy of Zephaniah; attitude of Zephaniah the reformer toward those who are "settled on their lees"; which class is more dangerous to efforts for moral reforms to-day, those who are hostile or those who are characterized in Zeph. 1: 12? the essence of the ideal of true blessedness presented in 3: 16, 17.

LESSON VIII

JEREMIAH (First Period)

Suggestions for Review.—Interval between eighth and seventh century prophets; religious and political condition of Judah when Zephaniah began his work; the leading ideas of Zephaniah's preaching, as to the day of the Lord, chief sins of people, future of people.

I. THE PROPHET AND HIS WORK

The prophet Jeremiah inevitably reminds one of Hosea. Both were men of intensely emotional natures, deeply sensitive and sympathetic, so that their personal sorrows led them into realms of spiritual insight, hitherto unknown even in the teachers of Israel. More is known of the facts of Jeremiah's life than is the case with any other prophet. He sprang from the company of priests settled at Anathoth, a village hardly more than an hour's walk to the northeast of Jerusalem, located on the eastern edge of the central range from which the barren hills that broke down to the north end of the Dead Sea constituted the prospect. Jeremiah's full consciousness of his prophetic mission first came in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign (626 B. C.). The opening of his ministry was thus almost coincident with that of Zephaniah. At this time he seems to have regarded himself as too young to undertake the work to which he felt himself set apart. This circumstance, together with the fact that he was still active as a prophet more than forty years later, indicates

that he was a very young man at the time of his call. It is probable that both he and Zephaniah were of almost the same age as the youthful king who was now about twenty-one years old.

The prophetic activity of Jeremiah falls most naturally into three periods, which may be designated by the names of the three rulers, Josiah, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah.

The first period of Jeremiah's ministry includes some eighteen years, nearly half of the prophet's career. Of

The Times the three hundred and fifty years of Judah's history from the division of the kingdom under Rehoboam to the Babylonian exile, this was, perhaps, the happiest period. The Scythian invasion that swept the coast plains left few if any scars upon the hills of Judah. The last important reign in Assyria closed at about the beginning of Jeremiah's ministry, so that her heavy tribute was removed from southwestern Asia. The neighboring tribes of Palestine had been so devastated that Judah was left the strongest state of the region. In these conditions, Josiah spread his dominion northward over no small part of the ancient territory of Israel. The religious glory of Josiah's reign, however, far surpassed any possible political renown. This was the era of the great Deuteronomic reform when, for the first time, the law of the central sanctuary, so prominent in Deuteronomy, was dominant and the ancient high places, always tainted with heathenish, sensual practices were thoroughly devastated. It is highly probable that Zephaniah and Jeremiah, with all the ardor of youthful reformers, were, in sympathy with such faithful

priests as Hilkiah, influential in bringing about that turning to Jehovah which led to the restoration of the sadly desecrated temple. In the course of this work, the book of the law was brought to light and read to the king. As a consequence, the great reformation, carrying out in detail the lofty requirements of the Deuteronomic law, was instituted under the personal direction of King Josiah. This was in the eighteenth year of the young king's reign (621 B. C.), some five years after the beginning of Jeremiah's ministry. While the keenly sensitive and deeply spiritual Jeremiah may have felt the superficial character of any religious reformation carried out by royal authority, on the whole the period must have been a happy one for the prophet. This period terminated in the sad tragedy of the king's death, when he went forth to dispute the passage of Pharaoh Hophra across Palestine. Assyria was about to be dismembered by the Medes and Babylonians, and Pharaoh was seeking to share the prey. The rash attempt of Josiah to prevent the Pharaoh's passage cost the good king his life and marked the close of Judah's political independence.

A few years after the death of Josiah, Jeremiah committed to writing the substance of his earlier preaching.

The This first roll was destroyed by King
Message Jehoiakim, and when Jeremiah rewrote he added other matter. The present book of Jeremiah clearly combines with these earlier utterances much that comes from still later years in the prophet's ministry, besides material, chiefly historical and biographical, that was written by other hands. A comparatively small

part of the present book gives evidence of belonging to the first period of the ministry. Chapters 2-6 may well be regarded as presenting Jeremiah's brief condensation of much of his preaching during those earlier years. Chapter 1 is the account of the prophet's call and 11: 1-8 has, with plausibility, been connected with the reform of 621.

The account of the inaugural vision contains the prophet's commission over the nation to pluck up, break down, build and plant, and the message of divine judgment upon Judah for her idolatry. The nations of the north are pictured as the instrument of this judgment. The following chapter suggests instantly Hosea's figure of Israel as the bride of Jehovah and his picture of her early devotion, followed by ingratitude and unfaithfulness. It includes also Hosea's charge that help had been sought from Egypt and Assyria. Idolatry is attacked again and again, while the figure of the unfaithful wife comes often to the surface, as the prophecy moves onward. The vices of cruelty and dishonesty that had called forth the great ethical demands of the eighth century prophets are less prominent, yet covetousness, false dealing and the blood of the poor call out for judgment. In one place the prophet compares Judah unfavorably with Israel, for, though she has seen her sister put away for unfaithfulness, she has not been warned, but has pursued a like course.

Here and there, in the midst of the black threatenings, gleams of hope flash out, if the nation will but return to Jehovah in sincerity. Remembering Jeremiah's own

revision of his sermons in the midst of the religious reaction under Jehoiakim, one cannot be sure just how much of the dark picture may refer to the years before Josiah's reform and how far the coloring has been affected by the conditions of Jehoiakim's reign. During the years immediately following Josiah's reform, it may be reasonably inferred from chapter 11, the substance of Jeremiah's preaching consisted of the requirements of the law of Deuteronomy.

II. ANALYSIS OF LESSON

Title.—1: 1-3.

Inaugural Vision.—1: 4-19.

Early Preaching.—2-6.

Judah's idolatry.—2.

Judah a faithless wife.—3: 1-5.

Judah not warned by fate of Israel.—3: 6-18.

Penitent nation to be pardoned.—3: 19-4: 2.

The foe from the north.—4: 3-6.

Preaching Covenant throughout Judæa.—11: 1-8.

Home Readings.—The above analysis will furnish a helpful outline for daily reading of Scripture or the following selections may be made: (1) 1; (2) 2: 1-18; (3) 2: 19-35; (4) 3: 1-5; 3: 19-4: 2; (5) 3: 6-18; (6) 5: 10-19; (7) 11: 1-8.

III. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN PREPARATION

Family home of Jeremiah (1: 1; 1 Kings 2: 26; Josh. 21: 18; Jer. 11: 21; 37: 12); opening of ministry (1: 2); probable youthfulness at call (1: 6; cf. 1: 3); writing of Jeremiah's earlier preaching (36: 1, 2, 27, 28, 32); assurance of divine support in prophetic mission (1: 8, 19); the commission (1: 10); the message (1: 14-16);

the nation a faithless wife (2: 2; 3: 1-5, 8); idolatry (2: 11, 13, 28; 5: 19); judgment to be executed by foe from north (4: 6, 16; 6: 1, 22, 23); ethical demands (2: 34; 5: 26-28; 6: 13); Israel and Judah (3: 10, 11); the prophet's hope (3: 12-18; 22-25; 4: 1, 2); preaching the Deuteronomic covenant (11: 1-8).

IV. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

Temperament of Jeremiah; family and home; date of call; probable age at call; length of ministry; natural divisions of ministry; Israel's political history during first eighteen years of Jeremiah's ministry; religious history of period; date of Deuteronomic reform; probable attitude of Jeremiah toward Josiah's reform; close of happy period; the first record of Jeremiah's first twenty-two years of preaching; composition of present book of Jeremiah; the harsh character of the message assigned to Jeremiah; assurance given the prophet at his call; Hosea's figure that Jeremiah adopted; chief sins attacked by Jeremiah; means of divine judgment seen by the prophet; Jeremiah's comparison between Israel and Judah; the prophet's message of hope; service probably rendered by Jeremiah at time of Deuteronomic reform; was Jeremiah's hesitancy to undertake his prophetic mission commendable? the possibilities and limits of moral reform by power of government and of religious reform by external authority illustrated by the reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah.

LESSON IX

NAHUM

Suggestions for Review.—The length and historical background of the first period of Jeremiah's ministry; home and family of Jeremiah; chief thoughts of Jeremiah's earlier preaching; possible substance of much of his preaching after 621.

I. THE PROPHET AND HIS WORK

The little oracle ascribed to Nahum furnishes almost no information as to the life of the writer, and hardly of-

The Man

fers a basis for an estimate of his personal characteristics. The heading indicates the name of the prophet's home; yet three widely separated regions vie, in tradition, as the locality indicated. One of these is near Nineveh, one in Galilee, while the third and most probable is in the south of Judæa.

Nahum's prophecy was unquestionably uttered between the fall of No-amon (Egyptian Thebes) about 661, and the destruction of Nineveh, about 607. The former event is referred to as already past (3: 8) and the latter is anticipated as yet to be consummated. In the present course, the book is taken up after Zephaniah and the first period of Jeremiah's work, in the belief that it should be dated only a very few years before Nineveh's fall. In one aspect, the book offers adequate ground for a definite statement as to the author—Nahum was a prophet of the greatest literary power. For vivid, intense, picturesque utterance he is hardly surpassed by

Isaiah himself. He pictures the noise, the rush, the terror of the siege of Nineveh with supreme force. The pent passion of a nation that has suffered indescribable woe for centuries finds brief, yet adequate, outlet in Nahum's burning cry of exultation over the downfall of the bloody city, a veritable lions' den.

The chief historical events of Nahum's age have already been rehearsed in the preceding lesson. In order

The Times to appreciate more fully, however, the one theme of Nahum's prophecy, we may rapidly review the historic relations of Assyria and Israel. It was in the middle of the ninth century that northern Israel first felt the power of this conquering people. Then Ahab had united with other Palestinian peoples in an attempt to repel one of Assyria's early western campaigns. A dozen years later, Jehu, who had overthrown the house of Ahab, was forced to pay tribute to an Assyrian monarch. Later on, a period of inaction on the part of Assyria gave opportunity for the long and prosperous reign of Jeroboam II. A few years after Jeroboam's death, the fatal device of Ahaz, King of Judah, for securing help against Israel and Syria made Judah tributary to Assyria, and led on to the complete destruction of both Syria and Israel. From this time (734) forward, Judah paid tribute, with more or less of regularity, till the time of Josiah. Assyria and Egypt were, during much of the period, face to face; distracted Judah sought aid now from one and now from the other; the true prophet, Isaiah, insisted that they should remain loyal to that allegiance to Assyria which they had volun-

tarily assumed. In his day, intrigue with Egypt led to the devastation of all the outlying districts of Judæa and only the providential destruction of Sennacherib's army saved Jerusalem from the fate of Samaria.

Now, at last, in Nahum's time, the death-knell of Assyria has struck and Judah's smothered hatred bursts forth in lurid flame. Assyria, weakened by

The Message the sweep of Scythian hordes over its territory, threatened by the rising power of the Medes and Babylonians, is seen by the waiting prophet, with its fortresses mere fig-trees bearing the first-ripe figs; if they be shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater. He cries "Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and rapine." He hears, with inner ear, the noise of the whip, and the noise of the rattling of wheels, and prancing horses, and bounding chariots. He sees, with inner eye, the horseman mounting, and the flashing sword, and the glittering spear; then a multitude of slain, so that they stumble upon their bodies.

Is the message only an exultant cry of vengeance from the cruelly oppressed? One cannot escape the conviction that, at times, in the Old Testament, human hardness of heart colors utterance. Christ said that it was for the hardness of their hearts that the ancient law permitted what he forbade, thus clearly recognizing a progress in revelation necessitated by human limitations. It is evident, to the historical student, that Israel's teachers progressed slowly from natural exultation in the downfall of hated foes to the supreme conception of sacrifice for others, in which sacrifice the marks of suffering are the

marks of the servant of Jehovah. Nahum lived before that truth had been revealed, when suffering was still viewed only as the token of divine judgment. The prophets before him had taught that nations fell at Jehovah's just will and because of their sins against his laws of justice and mercy. They had seen Assyria, the scourge in Jehovah's hand, lashing his unjust, unmerciful and unfaithful people, and now the cruel instrument of punishment was itself receiving just chastisement long predicted and long awaited. The platform to which the gradual revelation of the principles of divine government had risen in the sixth century before Christ, was the platform on which Nahum stood. The elevation of this position is to be appreciated, not by looking down from the heights of later prophecy or from the teachings of Jesus, but by looking up from the common Semitic conceptions in the midst of which Israel's prophets lived and according to which, as we have seen (Lesson II), the strife of nations was the personal struggle of their tribal gods. The victory of one people was the triumph of the god of that people over the god of the vanquished, or, at best, the defeat of one was due to the aloofness of its god who had been offended by lack of generous offerings and rigid observance of his forms of worship. From this common Semitic idea up to the conception of a just God, ruling over nations with an even hand, permitting one to triumph for a time, that he might thus punish cruelty, deceit and oppression in another, but, in turn, bringing vengeance upon this for its bloody rapine, is a lofty ascent, which speaks at every step of a righteous God

revealing himself to his children, just so far as they have advanced toward the possibility of apprehending him.

The first chapter of Nahum is a poem, uttering in general terms confident assurance through trust in Jehovah, who, slow to anger and great in power, will by no means clear the guilty. The second and third chapters are the application of these principles of divine government to guilty Nineveh. With the intense oracle of Nahum the cycle of prophecy concerning Assyria, begun by Amos, closes.

II. ANALYSIS OF LESSON

Title.—1: 1.

Jehovah's Appearance in Judgment and Defense.—1: 2-15.

Siege and Capture of Nineveh.—2.

Cruelty and Fall of Nineveh.—3.

Home Readings.—With the above outline of the prophecy in mind, the following division may be followed for daily Scripture reading: (1) 1: 1-7; (2) 1: 8-15; (3) 2; (4) 3: 1-11; (5) 3: 12-19; (6) Amos' view of divine government, Amos 2: 1-10; (7) Early pictures of Jehovah as a God of war, Judges 5: 23-31; Ex. 15: 1-7.

III. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN PREPARATION

Nahum's home (1: 1); date of oracle (3: 8-12); vivid word painting (2: 4-6, 8-12; 3: 1-4, 12, 13); Assyria's guilt (2: 12, 13; 3: 1, 19); conception of God (1: 2-8).

IV. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

Traditions as to Nahum's home; possible limits in dating Nahum's prophecy; probable date of Nahum relative to the be-

ginning of work of Zephaniah and Jeremiah ; literary excellence of Nahum's prophecy ; time at which Israel first came in contact with Assyria ; Judah's first relations with Assyria ; final chapter in relations of Northern Israel and Assyria ; Judah's relations with Assyria in Isaiah's time ; condition of Assyria in Nahum's time ; the theme of Nahum's oracle ; views of the divine government held by Nahum ; these views compared with common Semitic ideas ; the imprecatory element in Old Testament prophets and poets explained in the light of Christ's principle that revelation progressed with human capacity ; what are the principal ideas about God and his government taught by the prophets from Amos to Nahum ? are these ideas fundamental for our day ? would their complete adoption change our civic life for the better ? our church life ?

LESSON X

JEREMIAH (Second Period)

Suggestions for Review.—The date and occasion of Nahum's prophecy; its theme; its literary quality; its fundamental principles as to the divine government of nations.

I. THE PROPHET AND HIS WORK

The second period of Jeremiah's ministry includes the eleven years of Jehoiakim's reign together with the three months of his son, Jehoiachin. During this period, we have vivid pictures of the prophet engaged in his ministry and unusual revelations of the deep inner struggles through which he passed. We see him standing in the court of the temple, warning the worshipers who have come thither from the cities of Judah; we see him at the temple gate, denouncing the false confidence of those who trust in the sanctuary as a defense while they are guilty of moral and religious wrongs. In this period, plots against the life of the prophet are rife, even among the men of his native Anathoth. At times, bitter persecution calls from him fierce prayers for vengeance upon those who have plotted against him while he has been seeking their good. In his despair, he turns even upon Jehovah himself who has set him as a prophet of doom, making him a laughing-stock and his message a reproach. From rebellion his mood passes to confident trust that Jehovah will defend him from those who watch to entrap him, and will bring

vengeance upon them. Again he breaks forth, this time with those terrible imprecations upon the day of his birth, reechoed in the curse of Job. At another time the sensitive, passionate one pleads with Jehovah to spare his countrymen the doom which it is his fate to pronounce. Destined to know no comfort in wife and child, not permitted to enter a house of feasting, denied all the joys of the social life of humanity, the prophet must himself serve as a constant symbol of approaching doom.

In this period Jeremiah often teaches through symbolic acts and vivid illustrations. A fresh girdle, buried in a distant land and then brought back marred, is the symbol of captivity. The potter, shaping the clay at will, becomes the type of the ruler of nations. Taking advantage of the presence of a company of Rechabites in Jerusalem, Jeremiah offers them wine to drink. They steadfastly adhere to the command of abstinence, given long before by the founder of their tribe, and the prophet is able to draw a telling contrast, unfavorable to faithless Judah. It is during this second period of his ministry that Jeremiah commits the substance of his earlier preaching to writing. Thus, by every possible means, by preaching where the people congregate, by symbolic action, and by writing, the prophet delivers his message to his generation. Standing alone against false prophets, priests and rulers, ridiculed, forbidden to teach, locked in the cruel stocks, with his very life in constant danger, his sensitive, almost feminine heart shrank and quivered before his fate. He loved his people to whom he became an alien and a hated enemy ; he rebelled against his mis-

sion ; in passion he called for vengeance or turned and accused his God ; yet he went forth from his hours of weakness and rebelliousness to the duties of a prophet called to a mission of tragedy, which seems almost to prefigure that of Jesus of Nazareth.

With the death of the good king Josiah, the party in Judah favorable to reform met speedy reverses. The son

The Times of Josiah, who was chosen to succeed his father, was deposed by the victorious Pharaoh, now master of Palestine. This monarch appointed another son, Jehoiakim, to reign as an Egyptian vassal. Jehoiakim was the ruler who showed his scorn of Jehovah's prophet by cutting in pieces and burning the roll of his sermons. Under him idolatry, suppressed but not destroyed by Josiah's measures, returned in full flood.

Early in Jehoiakim's reign, Nineveh fell before the rising power of the Medes and Babylonians. Then came the death-grapple between Egypt and Babylon at Carchemish on the Euphrates (604 B. C.). The Egyptian hordes were swept back through Palestine in hopeless defeat. Nebuchadnezzar, son of the Babylonian king, thus added all Syria and Palestine to Babylon. For a few years Jehoiakim ruled as a vassal of Babylon, and then died, just as his faithlessness to his new master brought the army of Nebuchadnezzar to chastise Jerusalem. The son, Jehoiachin, sat upon the wretched throne for three months and then surrendered at discretion to the besieging army (597 B. C.).

It was probably during Jehoiakim's Egyptian vassalage,

when there was a brief era of peace, that Jeremiah stood at the temple gate, declaring to all that **The Message** their safety lay, not in any fancied inviolability of the sacred mount, but in amending their ways by executing justice between a man and his neighbor, by not oppressing the helpless, and not shedding innocent blood, nor walking after other gods. He accused them of stealing, murdering, committing adultery, swearing falsely, burning incense unto Baal, and then coming to stand before Jehovah in his house and saying, "We are delivered." He charged the people with offering child sacrifices like the heathen, of worshiping sun, moon and stars, and of forgetting Jehovah. Though he expressed, in the strongest manner, the hopelessness of a change in the evil character of his people, he also declared most definitely that Jehovah's message of doom and destruction was conditional; if the people would turn from their evil, God would repent of the evil that he thought to do unto them.

II. ANALYSIS OF LESSON

Vanity of Trust in the Temple.—7: 1-20.

Refusal to Listen to Prophets.—7: 21-8: 22.

Lamenting the Fate of the People.—9, 10: 17-25.

Failure to Observe Covenant.—11: 9-17.

Persecution by Men of Anathoth.—11: 18-12: 6.

Judah Overrun by Neighboring Tribes.—12: 7-17.

Symbol of the Buried Girdle.—13: 1-17.

Lament for Captivity of King.—13: 18, 19.

Can the Ethiopian Change his Skin?—13: 20-27.

Jeremiah Pleading with Jehovah.—14: 1-17: 18.

Lessons from the Potter.—18-20.

Prophecy conditional; plots.—18.

Ruin irrevocable.—19.

In the stocks; sentence of exile.—20: 1-6.

The prophet's hard fate.—20: 7-18.

Judgments on Rulers, Promise of Righteous Ruler.—22: 10-23: 8.

Babylon to Rule for Seventy Years.—25.

Temple to be Destroyed.—26.

Faithfulness of the Rechabites.—35.

Writing Prophecies.—36.

Message to Baruch.—45.

Home Readings.—The following selections from the passages included in the above outline are suggested for daily reading of Scripture: (1) 7: 1-20; (2) 11: 18-12: 6; (3) 13: 1-17; (4) 14: 1-18; (5) 18: 1-12; (6) 19; (7) 35.

III. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN PREPARATION

Some scenes of Jeremiah's preaching (7: 2; 11: 6; 19: 2, 14; 26: 2); plots against the prophet's life (11: 21; 18: 18); in the stocks (20: 2); Jeremiah's inner struggles (11: 20; 12: 1-6; 14: 10-13; 18: 19-23; 20: 7-18); excluded from family and social life (16: 2, 8); symbolic and figurative teaching (13: 1-9; 18: 1-6; 19: 10, 11; 35: 1-11); Jeremiah's preaching committed to writing, destroyed and rewritten (36: 2, 4, 9, 10, 18, 21-23, 32); Jeremiah's message as to false and true grounds of trust (7: 4-15); worship of nature (8: 2, 3); desertion of Jehovah (18: 13-17); hopeless fixity in evil (13: 23); message of doom conditional (18: 8); Nebuchadnezzar the instrument of punishment (25: 8-11).

IV. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

Extent of second period in Jeremiah's ministry; places chosen by Jeremiah for delivering his message; dangers which threatened

him ; the prophet's attitude toward his persecutors, toward his mission, toward God, toward his doomed countrymen ; his isolated condition ; his methods of teaching ; a true picture of Jeremiah's character ; the political condition of Judah during the eleven years following Josiah's defeat and death ; the fate of Nineveh, of Egypt ; the moral and religious condition of Judah under Jehoia-kim ; Jeremiah's attitude toward the temple compared with that of the people ; the true ground of hope ; the conditional character of prediction ; Jeremiah's predictions as to Nebuchadnezzar ; Jeremiah's attitude toward his persecutors compared with that of Nahum toward Nineveh ; was Jeremiah a weak and unworthy minister ? the human weaknesses of a prophet, his source of strength ; circumstances in the conditions of Jeremiah's ministry and in his own temperament that made his life peculiarly tragic ; constant danger of placing the minor and conditional before the universal and absolute in religion, illustrated in the application by the men of Jeremiah's day of Isaiah's teaching to his generation that Zion could not be captured ; application of principle to our own religious lives.

LESSON XI

HABAKKUK

Suggestions for Review.—Chief events of political history during Jeremiah's second period; moral and religious condition of Judah; persecution of Jeremiah; Jeremiah's methods of work; the ground of his message of doom.

I. THE PROPHET AND HIS WORK

The little book of Habakkuk has a much more personal note than that of Nahum. Nahum utters the na-

The Man tional outcry against cruel Nineveh and accounts for the judgment upon the city on those principles of the just government of nations that have been declared by the prophets preceding him. Habakkuk finds himself unable to square their grandly simple philosophy of retributive justice with all the facts that the complex development of history presents to his view. His brief oracle is long enough to give us a distinct view of the prophet's inner struggle with the perplexity. The truth is not given to him complete, in one perfect inspiration. He has to stand upon his watch-tower and wait for an answer to his doubt. He thus gives us a clear glimpse of the fact that a prophet may have to endure the pain of struggle with doubt, before he can attain a satisfying view of truth and confidently utter his "Thus saith the Lord." Hosea and Jeremiah reached their deepest insight through suffering, while Habakkuk arrived at his "audacious certitude of faith" through the dark valley of doubt.

It is probable that Habakkuk's oracle was uttered not far from the time of the battle of Carchemish, during the second period of Jeremiah's ministry. Some modern scholars, who believe that the violence against which he cries out, in the opening verses, is that of the Assyrian dominance, would place him within the first period of Jeremiah, when the hand of Assyria may still have been felt in Judah, but it seems more probable that Habakkuk's picture of the Chaldeans was drawn after they had begun their world-conquering career, and thus the earliest possible date for his message would be about the time of the battle of Carchemish, in which Nebuchadnezzar decisively defeated the Egyptians. If this view be correct, Habakkuk belongs to the very close of the seventh century, and the spoiling and violence against which he cries out are either the work of the Egyptians during their brief sway from the death of Josiah to the victory of Nebuchadnezzar over Pharaoh-necoh, or they are the work of the evil leaders and rulers of Judah during Jehoiakim's reign.

Whether the perpetrators of violence are thus the Egyptians or the rulers within the state of Judah, Habakkuk pictures his age as one in which the law is slacked and righteous judgment is wanting, while the wicked triumph over the righteous. As indicated already, the new Chaldean rulers of Babylon have begun their conquering career with a dash and fierceness that can only be compared to the swift movement of leopard or eagle, the ravenousness of wolves, or to the rush of the wind. For some years, Babylon had been

practically free from her former vassalage to Assyria under the Chaldean prince Nabopolassar, whose right arm was his swift and determined son and general, Nebuchadnezzar. The defeat of Pharaoh-necoh, on the banks of the Euphrates, had laid all Syria and Palestine open to Nebuchadnezzar's advance, when the death of his father compelled him to hurry back to Babylon, in order to secure his seat upon the throne. He soon established himself securely and was able to confirm his dominance over Palestine.

The oracle of Habakkuk opens with a cry to Jehovah because spoiling, violence, strife, contention, injustice prevail. To the question, "How long?"

The Message the prophet receives the answer that the fierce Chaldeans shall soon come as the instrument of judgment. Thus far his message is closely parallel with that of earlier prophets, who had seen Assyria as the instrument of judgment in Jehovah's hand. Assyria has now fallen, the victim of her own cruel rapacity, and Chaldea, haughty in the lust of conquest, rises before the prophet's vision as a new scourge in the hand of the just Ruler of nations; but Habakkuk cannot rest here, as his predecessors had done, in the simple faith that Jehovah is using the conqueror to punish those who have done violence and wrong. How can it be, questions this prophet, and with his question a new era opens in Israel's developing knowledge of God, how can it be that a righteous God can use the worse to chastise the better? So far as this is a philosophical question, Habakkuk finds no answer to his problem of

world-history. On his watch-tower, waiting, he receives, rather, the old, direct, prophetic message that one who increases that which is not his shall in turn become a prey; he who builds a town with blood and establishes a city by iniquity labors for fire and wearies himself for vanity. "Tyranny is suicide" is the terse phrase in which the essence of Habakkuk's series of "woes" has been well expressed. This truth which great conquerors have so rarely known, which dominant individuals, classes and nations have so rarely apprehended, Habakkuk uttered in a series of songs of doom against mighty Babylon, not when she was sinking to her ruin, but when she was rising in the lusty power of her uncontaminated youth. Tyranny is suicide, for justice does reign, though all about us we may see naught but the strong crushing the weak and worshiping his own power. This is the "audacious certitude of faith" that makes Habakkuk a prophet for the ages. The vision is yet for the appointed time and it panteth toward the end, and shall not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay. The day will yet dawn when nations, classes, individuals will know that the principle declared by the prophet of Jehovah in the little subject state, and applied to the nation that then dominated the world, shall not lie.

The book closes with one of the most magnificent hymns of confident trust in Jehovah though all else fail, ever uttered by the inspired psalmists of Israel. Many scholars believe the poem to be by a later hand than Habakkuk's, but, if this be so, it was indeed an inspira-

tion that placed it, not in the general book of Psalms, but as a fitting conclusion for Habakkuk's sublime faith born out of doubt.

II. ANALYSIS OF LESSON

Title.—1: 1.

The Prophet's Perplexity.—1: 2-2: 3.

Outcry against unchecked violence and injustice.—1: 2-4.

The Chaldeans as the instrument of judgment.—1: 5-11.

How can God permit the wicked to swallow up those more righteous?—1: 12-17.

The prophet waits for an answer.—2: 1-3.

The Answer.—2: 4-20.

The Chaldeans elated with pride, but the just shall be preserved.—2: 4, 5.

Assurance of Chaldeans' fall for their cruelty and rapacity.—2: 6-20.

Prayer of Habakkuk—A Psalm.—3.

Invocation.—3: 1, 2.

Majesty of Jehovah and discomfiture of his enemies.—3: 3-15.

In the prophet, fear and confidence.—3: 16-19.

Home Readings.—The following division of the prophecy may be made for daily reading of Scripture: (1) 1: 1-11; (2) 1: 12-17; (3) 2: 1-5; (4) 2: 6-20; (5) 3: 1-8; (6) 3: 9-15; (7) 3: 16-19.

III. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN PREPARATION

The prophet in doubt (1: 2-4, 12, 13; 2: 1); Habakkuk's picture of his times (1: 4); description of Chaldeans (1: 6-11); Jehoiakim subject to Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24: 1); answer to Habakkuk (2: 4, 6-8, etc.); the certainty of justice (2: 3); the coming of Jehovah (3: 3-11); query why Jehovah comes (3: 8); answer (3: 12-15); effect upon the poet (3: 16-19).

IV. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

Habakkuk and Nahum compared; ways in which great truths were revealed to Jeremiah, Hosea, Habakkuk; probable time of Habakkuk's ministry; Habakkuk's picture of his age; his characterization of the Chaldeans; the change of ruling power in Palestine at about Habakkuk's time; parallel between the thought of Habakkuk and that of earlier prophets; point at which Habakkuk goes beyond earlier prophets; essence of the answer that came to Habakkuk; applicability of Habakkuk's great principle to present social conditions, to our daily lives; theme of ch. 3.

LESSON XII

JEREMIAH (Third Period)

Suggestions for Review.—The times of Habakkuk; the instrument of Jehovah's judgment seen by Habakkuk; the problem raised; the faith of Habakkuk.

I. THE PROPHET AND HIS WORK

The third period of Jeremiah's ministry extends from the surrender of Jehoiachin and the partial exile of 597 to the close of Jeremiah's ministry, after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586.

The Man

During this period, the interest of the prophet is divided between the exiles in Babylon and the people left in Jerusalem. He instructs those in exile by letter, but the desperate folly of those left behind in Judæa calls forth his most constant energies, in a vain effort to check its course.

The weak king, Zedekiah, who seems, at times, disposed to listen to the warnings and advice of Jeremiah, is unable to protect the prophet from the hatred of the nobles, who, during the last siege of Jerusalem, secure his arrest and imprisonment on a false charge of desertion to the Chaldeans. Jeremiah's persistence in declaring the certainty of Chaldean dominance, finally leads the exasperated nobles to let him down into an empty cistern, there to sink in the mire at the bottom, and to starve. From this extremity he is rescued by permission of the king, and remains a prisoner till Jerusalem is captured.

Throughout these years, Jeremiah finds himself constantly opposed by the swarm of "false prophets," who give pleasant assurances that those already in exile shall soon be restored and that the Babylonian supremacy shall be brief. Early in Zedekiah's reign, Jeremiah placed a bar upon his neck and gave similar bars to the ambassadors that had come to Jerusalem from neighboring peoples, plotting rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar. By this symbol he would teach that Nebuchadnezzar's yoke of supremacy must rest upon them all. Hananiah, the prophet, broke the bar from Jeremiah's neck, and declared that within two years Jehovah would break the yoke of Babylon and restore the exiles; Jeremiah replaced his wooden yoke with one of iron. Priests and prophets alike came under his fierce condemnation during this period. The prophets taught those whose ways were evil that Jehovah would protect them. Jeremiah stood absolutely alone in announcing judgment upon the sinful nation. To the princes he seemed a traitor, for, when the nation had entered upon its last mad resistance to Babylon, he still taught that the Chaldeans would be victorious. After the capture of the city, Jeremiah was permitted to remain with the remnant of the people whom Nebuchadnezzar left in the land; upon the murder of the governor, this little company fled in terror to Egypt, and carried the prophet with them. The last glimpse of Jeremiah shows him denouncing the worship of the queen of heaven, to whom the exiles in Egypt were burning incense. Traditions as to the close of this tragic career vary. According to one, his countrymen in

Egypt stoned to death the faithful prophet, but another has it that he escaped to Babylon, and there died.

We have seen the close of the second period of Jeremiah's ministry marked by the surrender of King

The Times Jehoiachin in 597. At that time the king and court and the flower of the population, including nobles, warriors and skilled artisans, some ten thousand men, besides women and children, were carried into exile. During the next nine or ten years Zedekiah, uncle of Jehoiachin, ruled over those remaining in Jerusalem, as a Babylonian vassal. Then, however, under the influence of his nobles and looking to Egypt for support, he took the fatal step of revolt. The army of Nebuchadnezzar soon lay before the doomed capital of Judæa. The siege lasted a year and a half and the wretched people had known almost the last horrors of starvation before the city fell. The vessels of the temple that had not been taken in the former capture, and all other treasures were carried to Babylon. Jerusalem was burned, and its walls were thrown down. Many had already fled to Egypt; many had perished; the remainder, save the very poorest of the land, were carried exiles to Babylon; the city that was full of people sat solitary. The Babylonians appointed Gedaliah governor of the little community that was left, establishing his seat of government at Mizpah, a few miles north of Jerusalem. All went well for a short time and then the king of Ammon instigated a renegade Jew to murder Gedaliah and his supporters. It was against Jeremiah's protest that those who were left fled to Egypt.

In Judæa there remained only a few scattered peasants, without any form of local government.

From the standpoint of practical national policy, subsequent events showed that Jeremiah was right and the

The Message nobles of his day, supported by the false prophets, were wrong. Rebellion against

Nebuchadnezzar was absolutely hopeless. Egypt was unable to render any effective aid and, without her, Jerusalem was powerless to resist the siege of Nebuchadnezzar. Even after Jeremiah's warnings had been disregarded and rebellion had actually begun, it is probable that speedy submission, such as the prophet urged, was the best course then open for the political welfare of Judah. For the exiles in Babylon, too, Jeremiah's advice that they adapt themselves speedily and quietly to the conditions of existence in the distant land, and preserve their family and community life was, politically, the wisest.

Jeremiah's political foresight was far more than a shrewd grasping of the situation and adopting a course of prudent submission to the inevitable. He saw in the moral and religious conduct of his contemporaries a breaking of the covenant with Jehovah, and his enlightened vision perceived in the conquests of Nebuchadnezzar the hand of God in judgment. When Egypt's abortive effort to aid temporarily relieved Jerusalem from siege, the people reenslaved their Hebrew servants, whom, under the stress of fear, they had released, in obedience to the law of Deuteronomy. Such a situation as this reveals the true temper of Jeremiah's preaching.

He proclaims, in the name of an outraged God, in whose very house they had covenanted to free their Hebrew slaves, liberty to the sword, to the pestilence and to the famine.

During these last hopeless years, Jeremiah's message was not wholly one of siege, famine and exile. It was while he was himself a prisoner in the court of the guard, that he bought a piece of ancestral land in Anathoth and weighed out the purchase money and subscribed the deed in the presence of witnesses, to testify that houses and fields and vineyards should yet again be bought in the land. The prophet looked beyond the long years of coming exile to the day when He that scattered Israel would gather him and keep him as a shepherd doth his flock. He held firm faith that, when calamities had shown human help useless, Jehovah would bring back his people to their own land. During the years when the breaking of the written covenant was bringing its full measure of judgment, Jeremiah saw a day when a new covenant should be made; and this was the new covenant, that the law should be written in their hearts, so that no more any man should need to teach another, saying, Know Jehovah; for they should all know him from the least unto the greatest. To the heart-sick, weary prophet whose fate it was to stand alone, while his nation went madly on to her ruin, came, thus, out of the depths of despair, a clear, divine light revealing the spiritual character of true religion, as no other light revealed it till Christ himself taught among men. Jeremiah had seen the horrible idolatry of Manasseh's reign swept

away by the reform of Josiah, in conformity to the written law, and had heard the covenant of Jehovah and his people renewed. He had probably participated actively in the great reform. He had seen the tide sweep back, after a few short years, the covenant tossed aside, and all evil returning, while the doom of iniquity hastened on. Now the vision comes of a day when a new covenant shall be written in the heart of man and when iniquity shall be forgiven.

II. ANALYSIS OF LESSON

Reply to Zedekiah's Inquiry during Last Siege.—**21: 1-10.**

Appeal to the Court for Just Rule.—**21: 11-22: 9.**

The False Prophets.—**23: 9-40.**

The Good and Bad Figs.—**24.**

Against False Hopes.—**27-29.**

Effort to restrain Zedekiah from revolt.—**27.**

Controversy with Hananiah.—**28.**

Letter to Captives.—**29.**

Restoration.—**30-33.**

Jerusalem to be ruled again by prince of David's line.—**30.**

Hope for Ephraim and Judah.—**31: 1-30.**

The New Covenant.—**31: 31-34.**

Purchase of land at Anathoth.—**32.**

Purification and restoration of nation.—**33: 1-16.**

Breaking of Covenant to Free Slaves.—**34.**

Experiences of Jeremiah during Last Siege.—**37-39.**

Experiences of Jeremiah after Fall of Jerusalem.—**40-44.**

Prophecies against Foreign Nations (different periods).—**46-49.**

Fall of Jerusalem.—**52.**

Home Readings.—From the above outline the following selections are especially suggested for daily reading of Scripture: (1)

21: 1-10; (2) 21: 11-22: 9; (3) 28: 1-14; (4) 29: 1-14; (5) 30: 1-9, 18-23; (6) 37: 11-15; 38: 1-6; (7) 31: 29-34.

III. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN PREPARATION

Jeremiah's attitude toward exiles of 597 (24: 1-5; 29: 1, 5-10); attitude of Zedekiah and nobles toward Jeremiah (21: 1, 2; 37: 3, 11-15, 16-21; 38: 4-10, 14-16, 24-26); the message of the false prophets (23: 11, 16; 27: 9, 10, 16; 28: 2-4, 10, 11); bars of iron (28: 12-14); Jeremiah's policy of submission to Babylon (21: 8-10; 38: 17, 18; 29: 1, 5-10); Jeremiah accused of being a traitor (37: 11-15; 38: 1-4); last glimpse of Jeremiah (44: 1, 2, 7-10, 24, 25, 30); Jeremiah's fundamental principles of government (22: 1-5, 11, 12; 34: 6-11, 17); Jeremiah's message of hope (32: 9, 10, 15; 31: 10; 30: 1, 2, 8, 9, 18, 21; 31: 31-35).

IV. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

Limits of last period of Jeremiah's mission; prophet's double interest in third period; scene of his chief efforts; attitude of Zedekiah toward Jeremiah; attitude of nobles toward Jeremiah, and his sufferings at their hands; teachings of the false prophets; accusation made against Jeremiah; Jeremiah's experiences after fall of Jerusalem in 586; last glimpse of the prophet; the captives of 597, who, and how many? the new king; the destruction of Jerusalem, when, and how brought about? the remnant left in the land; national policy advocated by Jeremiah; why wise? advice to exiles in Babylon; true basis of Jerusalem's attitude on national questions; Jeremiah's hope for the nation's future on the temporal side, on the spiritual side; Jeremiah's view of a religion based upon written law; his ideal for religious guidance; a comparison of his teaching on these two points with those of Christ; do we realize the ideal of Jeremiah for the new covenant in our lives?

LESSON XIII

REVIEW

I. THE PROPHETS AND THEIR WORK

The twelve lessons now completed have dealt with eight different prophets, from Amos, the first whose message is preserved in a separate book, **The Men** to Jeremiah, whose work marks the close of the truly prophetic period of Israel's history. Later prophets labor in an age that is dominated by priestly ideals.

The personality of most of these prophets is plainly recognizable in their writings. The epoch-making truth of Amos shines clear through the crystal of his sternly just nature. The writing of Hosea mirrors a deep, loving nature, born to suffer and to enter within the veil. Isaiah shines forth, brilliant in his supreme gifts and attainments, towering above kings and all principal men of his age, the glory of his race, yet hating in the name of the exalted God, all that exalts itself among men. Micah stands in strong contrast to his brilliant, cultured contemporary, the embodiment of the peasants' cry for justice. Zephaniah has absorbed the great truths of his predecessors and applies them fearlessly to his own day, but his little oracle does not reveal one who stands forth among the others as a great, creative prophet. The message of Nahum is too brief to give a rounded picture of the writer's personality, yet it shows, focused in one intense nature, a burning element of the national spirit.

Habakkuk's short oracle is long enough to reveal the prophet as an earnest, devout thinker, who must needs strive to know and understand the God whom he serves. Jeremiah's words reveal a passionate, loving, faithful, intensely human nature that longs for man's sympathy and yet can stand alone with God, scorned and hated by all men. As a whole, these eight men illustrate the fact that God's chosen revealers of truth are selected by their inborn and cultivated capacities. Hosea, by his very nature, could not have done the work of Amos, nor could Amos have uttered the truth of Hosea. Isaiah and Micah give, in part, the same teaching, yet Micah could never have apprehended Isaiah's truth in its multiple aspects. It was, however, the peasant prophet whose influence was quoted to the king a century later. Habakkuk started a long line of fruitful thought that was absolutely foreign to the intense, direct vision of earlier prophets like Amos and Hosea.

All of these prophets were men who lived intensely in their own nation and age, yet they looked beyond the confines of Israel and comprehended the movement and struggle of nations, in a way that transcended the wisest human statesmanship, and they enunciated, for the first time in human speech, truths that the civilized world has yet fully to apprehend. In their manner of expressing these truths, they proved themselves teachers, poets, and orators, worthy to be studied as skilful teachers, strong and graceful poets, and resourceful orators among the chiefest in history. Yet all this was but the guinea's stamp to the souls of these men, who, by what they were and what

they suffered, became fit to know and reveal God to the ages.

About one hundred and seventy-five¹ years of history are included between the work of Amos and the close of

The Times Jeremiah's ministry. From the political standpoint, it was the period of the decline and fall of the nation. The external forces, however, that destroyed the nation made possible the development of teachings which an earlier age could not apprehend. Israel lay between the two most ancient centers of civilization known to history, the Tigris-Euphrates valley and the Nile valley. When David rose to power and extended his sway widely over the peoples of Palestine, neither of these centers was striving to draw to itself the intervening regions, as both had done in centuries before Israel had settled in the land. Throughout the age of prophecy, however, from Amos to Jeremiah, Palestine was the bone of contention between them. The two little kingdoms of Israel lacked the faith of the great prophets who strove to keep them neutral in reliance on Jehovah alone, and looked, now to Egypt, now to Assyria, for help. In the heart of this great struggle for world-supremacy, the people of Israel formed a new conception of the world.

Amos and Hosea taught in northern Israel a few years before its fall at the hands of Assyria. Isaiah and Micah labored in Judah at the time of the destruction of the federation of her sister tribes. The prophecy of the next century was probably called forth, in the first instance, by the ravages of the Scythian hordes, whose devastating

march seems reflected in Zephaniah. The approaching destruction of Assyria filled the vision of Nahum. Jeremiah labored throughout the years of Assyria's weakness and fall, the struggle for dominion between Egypt and Babylonia, and the conquest and destruction of Judah by Babylon. Habakkuk belongs to the time of conflict between Egypt and Babylon.

The domestic conditions of both northern and southern Israel, as seen through the eyes of the prophets of the eighth century, were characterized by those inequalities and social injustices that ever attend rapid development from simple, agricultural conditions to a more complex civilization, with developing class distinctions and monopolistic ownership. The prophets of the next century give far less attention to moral conditions, and emphasize especially the prevalence of idolatry, which became so rife in the intervening reign of Manasseh and was only temporarily checked by the drastic reform of Josiah.

With the new conception of the world that Israel gained through her contact with the great powers, she

The Message was, for the first time, prepared to comprehend the message of the just God of nations, who controlled the ambitions of kings to the working out of his righteous purposes. When the northern kingdom fell, the prophets interpreted its destruction as the just judgment of a just God, but they did not lose hope, for they saw that the righteous remnant within the nation would be saved. Before Judah sank to her ruin, they had begun to teach that the same righteous God would, in turn, bring destruction upon Israel's selfish

oppressors. Within the nation itself, when social inequalities and injustices developed, the prophets began to lay stress upon justice and mercy between man and man, rather than solemn assemblies and multitudes of costly offerings, as the true means of pleasing God. When the threatened judgment at last fell upon Judah, prophecy had already taught the divine lesson of a spiritual religion whose laws were to be written in the heart, and the loyal remnant was, at least, partly prepared to preserve its faith in Jehovah, even when the visible signs of his presence were destroyed. Thus, out of the conditions, needs, and capacities of the times, unfolded the great teachings of the prophets as to the true nature of God and the principles of his government. On these great conceptions of God and his government, the teaching of the prophets as to the history of the past, the statesmanship of the present, and the hope for the future, rest. On these same conceptions, rest, too, their demands for justice and mercy toward one's fellow men, and for humility and trust toward God, as the essential requirements of true religion.

II. ANALYSIS OF LESSON

I. Prophets of the Eighth Century.

1. Amos the prophet of righteousness.
2. Hosea the prophet of love.
3. Isaiah the prophet of an exalted God.
4. Micah the prophet of the common people.

II. Prophets of the Seventh Century.

1. Zephaniah the prophet of the judgment day.
2. Jeremiah the prophet of Judah's fall and of the law written in the heart.

3. Nahum the prophet of Assyria's doom.
4. Habakkuk the prophet of philosophical questioning.

Home Readings.—The following typical selections from each prophet are suggested for daily reading of Scripture, during the week of review: (1) Amos 2: 1-10; (2) Hosea 11: 1-11; (3) Isaiah 6; (4) Micah 3; (5) Zephaniah 3: 1-8; Nahum 3: 1-11; (6) Habakkuk 1: 12-2: 3; (7) Jeremiah 27: 12-15; 31: 31-34.

III. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

NOTE.—A selection may wisely be made from the following points for review, according to the interests and capacity of the particular class.

Names of eighth century prophets; a striking characteristic of each man; a prominent teaching of each; names of seventh century prophets; a striking characteristic of each man; a prominent teaching of each; individuality of the prophets as men in relation to their respective parts in revelation; skill of the prophets of the eighth and seventh centuries as teachers, poets, and orators; their greater glory.

General course of Israel's political history from Amos to Jeremiah; the significance of Israel's geographical position; Israel's new ideas in the ninth and eighth centuries; chronological position of Amos and Hosea in Israel's history; of Isaiah and Micah; historical circumstances that reawakened prophecy in the seventh century; great historical events during Jeremiah's ministry.

Sins chiefly attacked by prophets of eighth century; by those of seventh century; religious significance of Israel's enlarged conception of world; the prophetic interpretation of the fall of Israel; ground of hope in spite of national ruin; the prophetic teaching as to God's requirements; significance of Jeremiah's doctrine of the law in the heart coming just before destruction of Jerusalem; progress of divine revelation in relation to human needs and capacities; the fundamental element in the teaching of the prophets; the sum of prophetic teaching as to man's duty to man, man's duty to God.

III. Prophets of the Exile and Restoration

LESSON XIV

EZEKIEL (First Period)

Suggestions for Review.—Great national events during Jeremiah's later years; Jeremiah's national policy and his fundamental principles of government; the tragic personal experiences of Jeremiah during the third period of his ministry; his vision of the future.

I. THE PROPHET AND HIS WORK

Among those carried away from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B. C. was the young priest Ezekiel.

The Man Five years later, when he was in Babylonia, on the banks of one of the sluggish watercourses which traversed the low alluvial plains of that region, he saw a vision of Jehovah coming in stormy wind and flashing lightning, and heard a voice that commissioned him a prophet to Israel. Whether or not Ezekiel had actually ministered as a priest in Jerusalem before his captivity, he certainly had the greatest familiarity with all the details of the temple and its worship. In Babylonia, he lived in the community of exiles that was settled at Tel-abib by the river or canal Chebar, to the east of the city of Babylon, occupying his own house where the elders of Israel resorted to hear his message. We learn that the prophet's wife died at about the time

when the final siege of Jerusalem began, and that he could not mourn publicly for her because he must serve as a warning of the grief that would stupefy Israel at the coming judgment.

In his public ministry, Ezekiel carried symbolic teaching further than any of his predecessors. On a tile, he portrayed a city and round about it placed the means of mimic siege. He lay long upon his side and ate polluted food, carefully weighed and measured. He cut off his hair and burned some and scattered some to the winds of heaven. At another time, he carried out his goods by day and in the night dug through the wall and bore his goods on his shoulder, as though departing into exile.

In the Book of Ezekiel, the prophet's symbolic acts mingle almost indistinguishably with his far more complex symbolic visions. In these, we have the prototype of that elaborate symbolism which characterizes the later apocalyptic writings, such as Daniel and Revelation. Shining, winged beings with faces of man, lion, ox, and eagle; wheels set with eyes; the likeness of a throne as the appearance of a sapphire stone; one having the appearance of fire from his loins and downward and from his loins and upward as it were glowing metal; such are some of the strange images that appear in Ezekiel's pages and almost baffle the sober Occidental imagination. Yet Ezekiel lacks almost wholly the charming, poetic pictures and illustrations from nature that were so abundant in an Isaiah or Hosea. Israel and the prophet have been torn from the vine-clad hills of Palestine and set in the midst of a teeming population on the hot plains of Babylonia,

where the monotony is varied only by man-reared structures, and where a polytheistic religion has developed most elaborate symbolic sculpture. The Hebrew prophet, ever sensitive to his surroundings, ever ready to seize whatever might impress his hearers and make it the vehicle for his message, steeps his soul in the imagery of the region to which he and they have been rudely transferred.

The first period of Ezekiel's ministry coincides with a portion of the third in Jeremiah's work. Both prophets

The Times divide their interest somewhat between the people left in Jerusalem and those transferred to Babylonia. Jeremiah's book reveals much of the political confusion that characterized the wretched, weak reign of Zedekiah, who was unable to withstand the intrigues of the unprincipled nobles left in Jerusalem. Ezekiel, in his vision, is transferred to the temple and sees the abominable idolatry of creeping things and beasts and the worship of the sun, which fill its sacred precincts. Jeremiah shows that the exiles were expecting speedy release, and that those in Jerusalem were misled by false prophets, who taught that the captivity would be brief indeed, while Ezekiel indicates that the same false prophecy was rife in Babylonia. It may be inferred from Ezekiel and Jeremiah that Nebuchadnezzar allowed much of local independence to the company of exiles on the Chebar. They could build houses, preserve their family life, transact business, and maintain their national forms of life, under a large measure of local self-government, while messengers might pass between them and their fellow countrymen in Judæa.

At this period, the message of Ezekiel for the Babylonian exiles, like that of Jeremiah for those left in Palestine, was chiefly the declaration of the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the complete exile of its inhabitants. From the standpoint of political expediency it was, as we saw in the preceding lesson, vitally necessary that Israel, at home and abroad, should understand that resistance to the Babylonian power was utterly futile. Ezekiel's symbols of siege and flight, of eating polluted food carefully measured and, again, eating his food with trembling, or of burning and scattering his hair, all carried the one message of destruction, flight, scattering in exile, and living among the heathen. During the final siege of Jerusalem, when the last revolt had been undertaken in the confidence that Egypt would give effective aid, Ezekiel uttered messages of doom upon the wretched helper. As with other prophets, however, Ezekiel's political wisdom was the fruit of his religious insight and his statesmanship was but an aspect of his high prophetic mission. His nation was without faith in Jehovah; it was seeking help from a heathen power, and was offering worship to heathen gods in the hope of obtaining their aid. The great lesson of the prophets, that Jehovah ruled among the nations and used their proud conquests to execute his sovereign will, had not yet been learned by the people. The Babylonian exile was needed to impress the soul of the nation, through long years of meditation during the stagnancy of the outward national life. Ezekiel was busily engaged in preparing the way for the right reception of the

coming judgment which, if received wrongly, might crush out the last vestiges of his people's faith in Jehovah. If the death of Josiah and the partial exile of 597 had been followed by a flood of idolatry, in the belief that Jehovah had deserted his people and that other gods must be sought, what might not follow the destruction of the sacred city and temple! Ezekiel's visions of the glory of Jehovah riding above the cherubim, coming to Babylonia, leaving the temple and city, were instinct with the all-important truth for his age, the truth that Jehovah could come and had come to his people in the distant land. Another truth that was peculiarly necessary to enable Ezekiel's generation to receive the exile aright, concerned the relation of the individual to Jehovah. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel quote the proverb which was evidently on many lips in those days of retribution, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." By an easy application of Israel's earlier doctrine of retribution, those upon whom the terrors of these final days fell pitied themselves as the victims of their fathers' guilt. Now the time had come when, in the fall of the nation, the individual must stand in his naked personality before his God. Ezekiel elaborated the truth that Jeremiah had begun dimly to see, the truth that, before a just God, each stood or fell as an individual, according to his own personal life and present character, whatever the record of his fathers, whatever his own earlier vice or virtue. Thus, with a wise political foresight that pointed out to his generation the inevitable conclusion of the present struggle of nations, and

with a divine religious insight that saw the great truths necessary to make the chastisement a blessing, Ezekiel taught his fellow exiles, from the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity to the destruction of Jerusalem, six years later (592-586 B. C.).

Can one comprehend the twofold message of divine justice and divine mercy, that came to northern Israel through Amos and Hosea, just before her fall, and the manifold message of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, that prepared southern Israel for the destruction of the nation and the night of exile, and fail to see God opening to Israel just that measure of divine truth that the successive crises needed?

II. ANALYSIS OF LESSON

Preface.—1: 1-3.

Ezekiel's Repeated Call.—1: 4-3.

Symbols of Doom.—4, 5.

The Pollution and Doom of the Land.—6, 7.

Visions of Jerusalem's Sin and Punishment.—8-11.

Idolatry in the temple.—8.

Slaughter of idolaters.—9.

Fire scattered on the city.—10: 1-7.

The glory of Jehovah above the cherubim.—10: 8-20.

Judgment on wicked counselors.—11: 1-13.

Jehovah's care for the exiles.—11: 14-21.

Glory of God leaves the city.—11: 22-25.

Further Announcements of Jerusalem's Sin and Fall.—12-19.

Symbols of siege and exile.—12: 1-20.

The false prophets.—12: 21-14.

Allegories of the nation's sin.—15-17.

The individual and his God.—18.

88 PROPHETS OF THE EXILE AND RESTORATION

A dirge for the rulers of Israel.—19.

Later Prophecies of Judgment.—20-23.

Israel's sinful history.—20: 1-44. 1

Fire and sword directed against Jerusalem.—20: 45-21.

Jerusalem's moral corruption.—22.

Israel and Judah unfaithful wives.—23.

At the Opening of the Final Siege.—24.

Jerusalem to be cleansed by fire.—24: 1-14.

Death of prophet's wife.—24: 15-27.

Doom of Egypt.—29: 1-16; 30, 31.

Home Readings.—From the above list, the following typical passages are suggested for daily reading of Scripture: (1) 1; (2) 4: 1-13; (3) 8; (4) 11: 14-25; (5) 12: 1-20; (6) 18; (7) 22.

III. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN PREPARATION

Place and time of Ezekiel's repeated call (1: 1, 2; 3: 22, 23); his life in Babylonia (8: 1; 14: 1; 20: 1; 24: 15, 16); symbolic teaching (4: 1-3, 4-8; 12: 1-6, etc.); symbolic visions (1: 4-28; 1: 8; 8: 2, 3, etc.); vision of idolatry in Jerusalem (8: 9-16); false prophets (13: 1-7, 10, 11); principal subject of Ezekiel's message during first period, see "Analysis of Lesson"; belief in Jerusalem that Jehovah had forsaken his people (8: 12); glory of Jehovah in Babylon (1: 28; 3: 23; 11: 14-16); glory of Jehovah leaving temple (10: 18, 19); the individual judged as an individual (18: 4, 5-9, 10-13, 20, 21, 24).

IV. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

Date of the beginning of Ezekiel's captivity, of his call to the prophetic ministry; his time relatively to Jeremiah's; circumstances of Ezekiel's life in Babylonia; his use of symbolic teaching; character of the imagery in his visions; condition of worship in Jerusalem as pictured by Ezekiel; false prophets in Jerusalem and Tel-abib; conditions of life for the first exiles in Babylonia; the great

theme of Jeremiah and Ezekiel prior to 586 B. C.; the political wisdom of Ezekiel's preaching; scepticism in Jerusalem; the two great truths that Ezekiel taught the exiles; why were these truths especially important at that time? the progressive revelation of truth through Israel's prophets to meet new crises; is prophecy simply a natural growth? the truth in the doctrine of the visitation of iniquities unto the third and fourth generation and in Ezekiel's doctrine of individualism—can the two be harmonized?

LESSON XV 1

**OBADIAH AND PROPHECIES OF EZEKIEL AGAINST
FOREIGN NATIONS**

Suggestions for Review.—Date and historical circumstances of Ezekiel's first period; great theme of Ezekiel prior to 586 B. C.; two important truths especially taught.

I. OBADIAH AND HIS WORK

The subject of Obadiah's vision is clear, but the prophet's date is somewhat uncertain. On the whole, it seems probable that the references in
The Man verses 11-14 concern the hostile conduct of the Edomites at the time when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Chaldeans. The prophet, in that case, probably delivered his oracle soon after 586 B. C. and voiced the national condemnation of Edom's attitude at that fateful time. The first nine verses of his little oracle are, almost certainly, quoted from some earlier prophecy against Edom, which Jeremiah also quotes.¹ The latter part of the book, however, bears some marks of a post-exilic date, so that the problem of the time of Obadiah's work is a complex one. We can hardly characterize the prophet as more than a voice which utters the bitterness of the nation when she sees her neighbors exulting in her complete humiliation before Nebuchadnezzar.

¹ For the arguments which show that both Jeremiah and Obadiah quote an earlier prophecy, see Driver, "Literature of Old Testament," p. 319.

It is evident from Obadiah 11-14 that, when Jerusalem was sacked, the Edomites rejoiced and even participated in the plundering and in cutting off the fugitives who were escaping. The earlier verses of the prophecy give a vivid picture of the dwelling-place of Edom in the rocky fastnesses south of Judæa. There this people, counted as kindred of Israel, maintained itself through long centuries, in which mutual hatred found repeated opportunity for expression amid the vicissitudes of the two little peoples.

The first half of the prophecy is, like Nahum, an unrelieved message of doom against a cruel foe, but, brief as it is, the book of Obadiah does not stop here. It catches up in swift utterance the message of Zephaniah, of a day of judgment upon the nations, a day when their dealing shall return upon their own heads, and passes quickly to the firm, prophetic expectation that a saved and blessed remnant of Jehovah's people shall yet possess the land.

II. FOREIGN PROPHECIES OF EZEKIEL

The book of Ezekiel may be divided into three clearly marked sections. The second division (chapters 25-32) is made up of prophecies concerning foreign nations. A large part of these have the same general background as Obadiah 11-14. In chapter 25, Judah's immediate neighbors, Ammon, Edom, Moab, and the Philistines, are denounced because of their attitude on the occasion of Judah's captivity. Ammon and Moab have regarded Jeru-

salem's downfall as the refutation of Israel's claim to be the people of Jehovah. Edom and the Philistines have taken actual vengeance in the day of her distress. Following these short oracles, there comes an elaborate prophecy against Tyre for rejoicing in the discomfiture of Judah. The rich merchant city is pictured as a ship, equipped from every quarter of the world, wrecked and foundering. A short prophecy against Sidon declares that there shall no more be a hurting thorn of any that are round about the house of Israel, and that Jehovah shall be known in the execution of judgment. The remaining chapters of the section consist of a series of oracles against Egypt. Some of these are dated within the first period of Ezekiel's ministry and have been touched upon in the previous lesson. Others were delivered about two years after the fall of Jerusalem, and one bears the latest date given in Ezekiel's book, the twenty-seventh year, 570 B. C. One of these prophecies, ascribed to a time about two years after Jerusalem's fall, is a remarkable dirge over Pharaoh and his army descending into Sheol to join Asshur and the other oppressors of Israel. The weird poem might well be styled a primitive Inferno. Ezekiel's vision searched the entire horizon of contemporary history as, with a wonderful wealth of Oriental imagery, he pronounced judgment upon strong cities and mighty rulers. A true prophet, he read the complex struggles of his stirring age in the light of faith in Jehovah, the just ruler of nations.

III. ANALYSIS OF LESSON

Obadiah.

Destruction of Edom.—1-16.

Restoration and supremacy of Israel.—17-21.

Prophecies of Ezekiel against Foreign Nations.—25-32.

Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia.—25.

Tyre (586 B. C.).—26-28 : 19.

Zidon.—28 : 20-23.

Israel restored.—28 : 24-26.

Egypt.—29-32.

(Shortly before fall of Egypt.—29 : 1-16).

Nebuchadnezzar to conquer Egypt (570 B. C.).—29 : 17-21.

(Shortly before fall of Jerusalem.—30, 31.)

The nation's lament over Egypt (584 B. C.).—32 : 1-16.

Ezekiel's dirge for Egypt.—32 : 17-32.

Home Readings.—The entire Biblical material indicated in the above analysis may easily be read during the week, or the following selections may be made: (1) Ob. 1-16; (2) Ob. 17-21; (3) Ezek. 25 : 12-17; (4) Ezek. 27 : 1-11; (5) Ezek. 27 : 26-36; (6) Ezek. 32 : 1-16; (7) Ezek. 32 : 17-32.

IV. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN PREPARATION

Conduct of Edom at time of Jerusalem's capture (Ob. 11-14; Ezek. 25 : 12); Edom's dwelling-place (Ob. 3, 4); the day of judgment upon the nations (Ob. 15, 16); the restored remnant, (Ob. 17); attitude of Judah's neighbors at time of captivity (Ezek. 25 : 3, 8, 12, 15; 26 : 2); the ship of state (Ezek. 27 : 3ff.); latest date given in (Ezek. 29 : 17); dirge over Pharaoh (Ezek. 32 : 19-32).

V. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

Probable date of Obadiah; Obadiah's function; conduct of Edom at the fall of Jerusalem; home of Edom; subjects treated by

94 PROPHETS OF THE EXILE AND RESTORATION

Obadiah ; ground of Ezekiel's condemnation of Ammon and Moab, of Edom and the Philistines, of Tyre ; appropriateness of picturing Tyre as a ship ; hope of Ezekiel expressed in prophecy against Sidon ; latest date in Ezekiel ; Ezekiel's literary power as seen in dirge over Pharaoh ; breadth of Ezekiel's view ; fundamental principle in Ezekiel's view of the nations ; lessons for our own day in prophecies of Obadiah and Ezekiel against foreign nations.

LESSON XVI

EZEKIEL (Second Period)

Suggestions for Review.—Time of Obadiah; substance of his message; conduct of Judah's neighbors as pictured by Obadiah and Ezekiel; prophetic principle underlying messages of doom upon nations.

I. THE PROPHET AND HIS WORK

The second period of Ezekiel's ministry opens six months after the fall of Jerusalem (January, 585 B. C.) and

The Man extends to the year 570. The prophet, whose mouth had been closed before the fall of the city, began to speak again when the announcement came that the city was smitten. The fulfilment of his predictions in the city's fall gave him great reputation among his fellow exiles, so that they talked of him by the walls and in the doors of the houses, saying, "Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from Jehovah" (33:30). To Ezekiel himself, the opening of the new stage in his ministry was marked by a renewed sense of his pastoral responsibility. This prophet's clear vision of the relation of the individual to God enabled him to see with terrible distinctness the responsibility of one who had been charged with a message of warning. To him, the prophet was a responsible watchman upon whose head blood would rest if he failed to give his message of judgment upon the sinner.

The heroic character of the true prophet is strikingly exhibited in the contrast between the two periods of

Ezekiel's preaching. While blind, false confidence prevails, it is the duty of the prophet to show that Jehovah must bring judgment upon the sinful. This is indeed a thankless task in every age, and one that engenders hostility and contempt. When the crushing blow has fallen, and those who have rested their confidence on emptiness lie stunned and despairing, it becomes the prophet's duty to forget his own grief and to bring hope and strength to the miserable weaklings whose boastings had previously filled all ears. Ezekiel before the fall of Jerusalem and Ezekiel after the catastrophe seem different men, and yet, when understood aright, Ezekiel is seen as the one who stands out among all that wretched company in Babylon, truly consistent. The same convictions that made him, in the earlier period, the constant messenger of doom, make him, in the later time, the equally constant minister of hope.

In the second period of the prophet's ministry, the priestly element in his teaching becomes prominent. Earlier prophets, from Amos to Jeremiah, had shown little but scorn for all forms of worship. Ezekiel's hope for restored Israel included a temple more elaborate than that of Solomon, together with a rigid observance of formal distinctions in religious persons, places, things, and times.

Our knowledge of the life of Israel in Babylon during the twenty-six years from the fall of Jerusalem to the last date in Ezekiel is very slight. It is probable, however, that those exiles who were carried away upon the fall of Jerusalem were subjected to

much harsher treatment than those deported in 597. Nebuchadnezzar continued to reign till several years after the last date named in Ezekiel. His long rule was an era of great splendor and prosperity for Babylonia. He rebuilt the city of Babylon on a stupendous scale. He restored and extended the wonderful system of canals that gave to all parts of the land fertility and easy intercommunication. Great commercial activity prevailed, and, doubtless, many of the foreign exiles brought into the community were needed to develop its agricultural resources and supply food products for its teeming population. Others were required to carry out Nebuchadnezzar's great building enterprises. Slight references in the Biblical writings suggest that actual enslavement at task labor may have been the lot of many among the Jewish exiles, particularly those of the second deportation. Certain it is that great discouragement and much doubt as to Jehovah's care for his people demanded the most earnest efforts of the great priest-prophet.

Ezekiel had foreseen Jerusalem's doom, for he had known her wickedness and had understood the righteousness of Jehovah. He now foresees her

The Message restoration, for he trusts absolutely the mercy of Jehovah toward his stricken and penitent people. He had prepared the way for the heavy affliction by teaching that Jehovah was in Babylon with his people and that each individual might expect recognition before God's justice, independently of the sin of his nation, and of his own past life. Now, when nearly all outward symbols of Judah's relation to Jehovah are obliterated, and

the people are surrounded by the visible symbols of dominant and elaborate heathen worship, if any are to be kept faithful to Jehovah, prophecy must speak with no uncertain tones.

The prophet reiterates his lessons of individual responsibility, denounces the exiles who listen to his words as to pleasant music, without heeding his calls to righteousness, and declares that the former rulers have been evil shepherds, but that Jehovah will shepherd his people and give them a prince of David's house. He promises that they shall be restored to their land which shall be populous and fertile, while they, themselves, shall receive a new heart. Terrible nations shall attack them after their restoration, but to their own annihilation, and Jehovah shall be vindicated. Near the close of his ministry, the prophet commits to writing visions of the restored city and temple and plans for the conduct of worship there and for the ideal division of the land between the twelve tribes, the priests, Levites, and prince. This priest-prophet, living when almost all outward forms of worship are impossible, knows that the vision of a religion which is purely spiritual, is beyond the attainment of human nature as it exists about him. So he pictures, in splendid colors, the hope of a renewal of those visible symbols without which men lose the inner life.

Ezekiel's visions of elaborate ritual largely inspired, no doubt, the development of the priestly distinctions of Judaism, for which later generations were content to die. Ezekiel thus marks the transition from the age of pure prophecy, with its sole emphasis upon the spiritual

and moral, to a growing sacerdotalism, with its emphasis upon distinctive forms. In Ezekiel, both elements of religion are marvelously united.

II. ANALYSIS OF LESSON

Israel Restored.—**33-48.**

The Prophet's Responsibility.—**33: 1-9.**

The Individual's Responsibility.—**33: 10-20.**

Message on Receipt of News of Jerusalem's Fall.—**33: 21-33.**

Restoration Hopes.—**34-39.**

Promise of Davidic prince.—**34.**

A restored land and a new heart.—**35, 36.**

The nation restored to life.—**37: 1-14.**

Reunion of Judah and Israel under David.—**37: 15-28.**

Jehovah's vindication upon distant nations.—**38, 39.**

Restoration Plans.—**40-48.**

The new temple and altar.—**40-43.**

The new priesthood.—**44.**

Allotment of land.—**45: 1-8.**

Regular provision for sacrifices.—**45: 9-46.**

The land made fertile and divided.—**47, 48.**

Home Readings.—The following selections from the above outline will give a glimpse of some of the leading elements in Ezekiel's hopes and teachings shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem: (1) **33: 1-9**, cf. **3: 16-21**; (2) **33: 10-20**, cf. **18**; (3) **33: 21-33**; (4) **36: 22-31**; (5) **37: 1-14**; (6) **34: 11-24**; (7) **38: 14-23**.

III. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN PREPARATION

Extent of second period of Ezekiel's ministry (**33: 21**). (The date indicated by the "twelfth year" is January, 584, but the reading "eleventh year," supported by some manuscripts of the Hebrew and Greek and by the ancient Syriac translation, is far more proba-

ble) (29: 17); occasion of renewed ministry (33: 21, 22, cf. 24: 25); Ezekiel's reputation after fall of Jerusalem (33: 30-32); Ezekiel's own feelings at opening of each stage of his ministry (3: 16-21; 33: 7-9); Israel's unfaithful rulers (34: 1-3); the good shepherd (34: 11, 12); the new ruler (34: 23, 24); the restored land (36: 8-11); the renewed people (36: 25-28; 37: 11-14; 39: 28, 29); Jehovah vindicated (39: 21-24); Ezekiel's emphasis upon ritual, see "Analysis" chapters 40-48.

IV. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

Years included in second period of Ezekiel's ministry; occasion for Ezekiel's resuming his prophetic ministry; effect of Jerusalem's fall upon Ezekiel's reputation, cf. influence of Jerusalem's deliverance in 701 B. C. upon the reputation of Isaiah; Ezekiel's application of his doctrine of individual responsibility to himself; significance of reiteration of this doctrine in chapter 33; heroic element seen in Ezekiel; Ezekiel's consistency; was Ezekiel strictly a prophet? probable fate of exiles of 586 B. C.; general character of Babylonian history during first thirty-five years of exile; spirit of exiles after fall of Jerusalem; real basis of Ezekiel's certainty of doom and hope; chief elements in Ezekiel's hopes for future; changed conditions that demanded a priest-prophet, rather than an Amos, Hosea, or Isaiah; importance of Ezekiel's priestly influence; what are the true elements of religion as taught by the great prophets from Amos to Jeremiah? are outward forms, on which Ezekiel lays so much stress, important in the present age for the church in general? for ourselves?

LESSON XVII

ISAIAH 40-55

Suggestions for Review.—Time and occasion of second period of Ezekiel's ministry; general theme of teaching in this period; Ezekiel's expectation as to his nation's future; the two great elements of Israel's religion that were combined in Ezekiel.

I. THE PROPHET AND HIS WORK

The prophecies of Isaiah the son of Amoz were closed with the historical appendix, Isaiah 36-39. Chapters 40ff.

The Man evidently became attached to this collection at a later time. Isaiah 40-48 is commonly regarded as belonging to the later years of Babylon's rule, between 549 and 538 B. C. Chapters 49-55 do not bear as strong marks of their historical background as 40-48, but they probably come from the same hand and period.

Of the personality of the author, it is difficult to obtain even a glimpse. He styles himself a "voice" and by no other prophet is the function of a "voice" speaking for Jehovah more absolutely realized. As we read these beautiful messages, our thought does not rest upon the speaker, but upon the God of power and mercy who is preparing deliverance for the hopeless exiles. The writer has been called "the great unknown," and not the least great of his attributes is his power to transmit the divine word as through a perfect crystal which does not tinge the white light with any color of its own.

After the long reign of Nebuchadnezzar ended, few and evil were the days of the throne that he had established. Two assassinations and usurpa-

The Times tions occurred within the next six years, and soon the rising power of Cyrus on the east portended the downfall of Babylon. A dozen years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar, this new ruler, who had already united the Persian tribes under his sway, conquered and united with his own the Median kingdom, to the north of Babylonia. During the next few years the strong kingdom of Lydia in western Asia Minor and other Asiatic territory fell under his rule. In the year 538, he conquered Babylon, itself. It was the progress of this "shepherd" and "anointed" one of Jehovah that unstopped the voice of prophecy, silent during the middle portion of the exile. The Jews, sadly in need of faith in Jehovah in Ezekiel's day, now doubted the power of their God to release them. The Babylonian deities, whose splendid worship the exiles saw about them, had clearly given the victory to the oppressors of Jehovah's people. While Cyrus is still in the distant north and the last king of Babylon is devoting himself to restoring, with splendid pomp, the worship of Babylonia's most ancient gods, the voice is heard of one that crieth, and the words fall sweet upon the ear, "Com-

The Message fort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God"; and suddenly there seems a multitude of heavenly voices crying, "Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah." "All flesh is grass, . . . but the word of our God shall stand forever." "Be-

hold, the Lord Jehovah will come. . . . He will feed his flock like a shepherd." In splendid lyric strain the song goes on to picture the power of Jehovah in nature, in his unique Godhead, and in his rule over the nations. With scorn it declares the impossibility of representing Him that sitteth above the circle of the earth in image of wood or stone. This God will give power to faint and weary Israel, if they will but wait for him. He it is who has raised up Cyrus and sent him on his world-conquering career. He has chosen Israel, his servant, and is still Israel's God. The idol gods of Babylon have neither knowledge nor power. They are made of common metal or of wood such as one burns, and they must needs be carried about, while Jehovah bears up his people and will bring them through perils of land and flood, safe back to their native land. Proud Babylon is doomed. Israel shall go forth from her. With a voice of singing, declare it to the end of the earth, Jehovah hath redeemed his servant Jacob. Interwoven with these prophecies, there is a series of passages concerning some wonderful "servant" of Jehovah who is to set justice in the earth without even quenching a dimly burning wick. He will open the blind eyes and bring out the prisoners from the dungeon. The figure of this servant is elusive. He is called Israel, yet he is to bring Israel back unto Jehovah. More than this, he is to be a light unto the Gentiles, salvation unto the ends of the earth. He has known how to bear a message of comfort to the weary, and he has submitted himself to persecution and scorn. Despised

idol

servant

and rejected, he has borne the griefs and sorrows of others, suffering for their iniquities. Therein he triumphs, for he pours out his soul unto death.

We have reached in these "servant passages" the highest and most divine thought that human language ever uttered. Prophecy has mounted on eagle wings above its own earlier self, when it has attained to the conception of sacrifice for service as the achievement of Jehovah's true servant. It has been thought that the sufferings of Jeremiah, or of the prophets generally, may have suggested the picture of the servant. Again, the figure has been interpreted as a personification of Israel herself, conceived as suffering for humanity. Israel is certainly called Jehovah's servant again and again in Isaiah 40-55, but, as we have seen, the servant is also distinguished from Israel as a whole, for his mission is to call Israel back. Some have thought accordingly that the servant was the true kernel of the nation whose service was to restore Israel and to be a light to the Gentiles.

The true son of Israel to-day, when his nation has lived on through millenniums more of scorn and rejection, counts her Jehovah's suffering servant, scattered abroad as yet to prove a light to the Gentiles. The Christian finds the ideal perfectly realized in Jesus, the Christ. Both may unite in seeking to make this ideal supreme for every age. Sacrifice, in the service of humanity, for the sake of a just and merciful Father, is the supreme life-principle of Israel's ancient prophecy. Sacrifice, in the service of humanity, for the sake of a just and merciful Father, has never been perfectly realized save in the life

and death of Jesus of Nazareth. To-day, and still in ages to come, this life-principle must remain God's guiding star for humanity's highest achievement.

II. ANALYSIS OF LESSON

Deliverance of Israel through Cyrus.—40-48.

Jehovah to lead back his people.—40, 41.

The servant.—42: 1-9.

Jehovah the deliverer.—42: 10-48.

The Assured Restoration.—49-55.

The servant.—49: 1-3.

Jehovah's power and purpose to restore.—49: 14-50: 3.

The servant.—50: 4-9 (10, 11).

Exultant songs of coming restoration.—51-52: 12.

The servant.—52: 13-53.

Zion's future glory.—54.

Exhortation to prepare for deliverance.—55.

Home Readings.—To gain an adequate appreciation of this wonderful prophecy, it should be read as a whole, with the aid of the above analysis. The following selections will, however, give some taste of its treasures: (1) 40: 1-17; (2) 41: 8-20; (3) 45: 1-10; (4) 46; (5) 51: 9-20; (6) 42: 1-9; 49: 1-6; (7) 50: 4-9; 52: 13-53.

III. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN PREPARATION

Some indications of the historical background of Isaiah 40-55, (43: 5, 6, 14; 47: 1-11; 48: 14, 15, 20; 51: 11, 14; 52: 3; 40: 2; 44: 26; 51: 17, 19; 52: 1, 2; 41: 2-5; 45: 1-4); the people's doubt (40: 27; 49: 14, 24, 25); Jehovah's power to deliver (40: 12-23; 46: 1-11, etc.); his purpose to deliver (43: 1-7, etc.); his instrument of deliverance (44: 28; 45: 1); the folly of idols (44: 12-17); Babylon's doom (47: 1-3); the service of Jehovah's servant (42: 1-4, 7; 49: 5, 6; 50: 4, 6; 53: 3-5); reason for his glory (53: 12).

IV. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

Relation of Isaiah 1-39 and 40ff.; personality of the writer of 40-55; his conception of his function; political conditions in Babylon after the death of Nebuchadnezzar; rise of Cyrus; date of his conquest of Babylon; the occasion of a renewal of prophecy; condition of mind of the exiles at time of renewal of prophecy; theme of the message by which the prophet seeks to rouse the exiles; arguments as to Jehovah's power, his attitude toward Israel; work of Cyrus as seen by the prophet; the character and mission of Jehovah's ideal servant; how far was the ideal realized in Jeremiah, in the prophets as a whole, in Israel or the faithful kernel of Israel? has it ever been fully realized? has this ideal any relation to our personal lives? does the Bible or any literature contain any loftier thought than that of the servant passages of Isaiah 40-55? compare this thought with the ideals of the writers of Greece, Rome, England, America, or any other nation; apply it to our daily living.

LESSON XVIII

HAGGAI

Suggestions for Review.—Date and historical occasion of Isaiah 40-55; great themes of these chapters exclusive of servant passages; elements in the picture of Jehovah's ideal servant.

I. THE PROPHET AND HIS WORK

In passing to the study of Haggai, the scene changes from Babylon back to Jerusalem. Some eighteen years

The Man have passed since Cyrus annexed Babylonia to the Medo-Persian empire. Under his tolerant rule the Jews have been permitted to begin rebuilding their city, but they have not restored the temple. Haggai is moved with an intense zeal for the rebuilding of the sanctuary. Like the prophets of old, he sees the vital need of his day, and addresses himself to it with inspired devotion. As far as we can gather from the remains of Haggai's addresses, he is a man of a direct and practical nature who knows how to get things done. He appeals, at first, to those motives that will be most apt to rouse the governor, high priest and people to undertake the work toward which they are as yet apathetic. When their spirit has been stirred and the work begun and they have become discouraged in its midst, because of their meager ability, this practical leader of men encourages them with a vision of the future glories which shall flow from their endeavor. Haggai presents a very strong contrast to the great poet-souls among the proph-

ets who saw within the veil and revealed, for their own day and all time, the loftiest truths that the human soul can apprehend ; but he accomplished for his day the work that, just then, was most necessary.

Cyrus founded a vast empire on the basis of the largest measure of local freedom consistent with a united domain. His successor, Cambyses, added

The Times Egypt to the great Asiatic possessions of Cyrus. A usurper then seized the throne which was soon taken from him by Darius Hystaspis. Many parts of the empire were now in revolt and their complete subjugation required four years of vigorous effort on the part of Darius. It was during this time of uncertainty, in the second year of Darius, that Haggai's first address was delivered (September, 520 B. C.). It is not improbable that the general restlessness of the empire had stirred Jerusalem and that the prophet took advantage of this to direct the hopes and energies of rulers and people toward the building of the temple. The little community in Jerusalem had experienced great want and hardship while trying to wrest a livelihood from the denuded and desolate land upon which the neighboring tribes had sadly encroached during the years of exile. The rebuilt Jerusalem was, as yet, but a collection of dwellings, without protecting walls. The local governor of the wretched community was Zerubbabel, grandson of King Jehoiachin, and the high priest was Joshua, grandson of the priest Seriah whom Nebuchadnezzar had executed after the capture of Jerusalem.

The prophet's message is addressed, in the first instance,

to Zerubbabel and Joshua, but the people are evidently included in its intent, for he reminds them

The Message that they dwell in ceiled houses while Jehovah's house lies waste. He refers to the hardships and disappointments that they have experienced and declares them providential visitations because they have attended to their own houses, rather than Jehovah's. In three weeks' time, encouraged by Haggai's assurance that Jehovah is with them in the undertaking, they begin to build. A month passes and the people are discouraged as they see how inferior this temple will be to its predecessor, in the erection of which Solomon had commanded the resources of a kingdom, and had even secured foreign material and skill. Now, the apparently prosaic prophet bursts forth into glowing pictures of the glory that Jehovah will bring to the poor structure raised in his honor. The latter glory of the house shall be greater than the former ; here peace shall abide. Two months more of labor go by, and, again, the prophet appeals to the people. This time he argues from a principle of ceremonial uncleanness to show how the lack of a temple has necessarily caused the evil estate of the people ; but henceforth, Jehovah's blessing is assured. A second time on the same day he speaks, and this time it is to apply the old hope in the Davidic line to its present representative, Zerubbabel, whom Jehovah has chosen as a signet ring.

Here the voice of Haggai becomes silent, but the temple building, which he had inaugurated, goes forward during four years, in the face of opposition and dis-

couragement, until it is brought to a successful issue. Around this little building, that rose,¹ thus, out of poverty and discouragement, centered, for five long centuries, the worship of a God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

II. ANALYSIS OF LESSON

Opening Message (Second year of Darius, sixth month, first day), Sept., 520 B. C.—1 : 1-11.

Work Begun (sixth month, twenty-fourth day).—1 : 12-15.

Message of Encouragement (seventh month, twenty-first day).—2 : 1-9.

Message of Instruction and Hope (ninth month, twenty-fourth day).—2 : 10-19.

The Davidic Prince (ninth month, twenty-fourth day).—2 : 20-23.

Home Readings.—The above analysis will give a convenient division for five daily readings. The following passages are suggested for the remaining days of the week (1) Ezra 5 : 1-5; 6 : 14, 15; (2) Ezra 6 : 1-5.

III. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN PREPARATION

The motives to which Haggai makes his first appeal (1 : 4, 8-11); the attitude of the people toward the work (1 : 2); the motive to which Haggai appeals later (2 : 5-9); the hard experiences of the Judæan community prior to 520 B. C. (1 : 10, 11; 2 : 15-19); Haggai's view of the cause of the hardships (1 : 9; 2 : 11-14); the people's discouragement (2 : 3); expectation for future glory of temple (2 : 6-9); hope in Davidic representative (2 : 23).

IV. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

Scene of Haggai's ministry; time of ministry; Haggai's purpose; the strongest characteristics of Haggai; the motives to

which he appeals; attitude of the people before Haggai's work, after work has been begun; contrast between Haggai and the greatest of the prophets; outline of Persian history from 538-520; significance of the time chosen by Haggai for his endeavor; condition of Jerusalem at opening of Haggai's mission; the local rulers in Jerusalem; Haggai's interpretation of hardships experienced; effect of Haggai's first message; cause of later discouragement; substance of the prophet's message of encouragement; the Messianic hope of Haggai; lessons to be drawn from the noticeable variety in the character and abilities of Jehovah's prophets; lessons from the building of the second temple out of poverty and weakness.

LESSON XIX¹

ZECHARIAH

Suggestions for Review.—Occasion of Haggai's prophecy; effect of his work; differences between Haggai and other prophets.

I. THE PROPHET AND HIS WORK

The narrative in Ezra associates the name of Zechariah, the son of Iddo, with that of Haggai in the work of rebuilding the temple, and the dates given in the book of Zechariah show that he worked, in part, contemporaneously with Haggai. His first message was delivered in the eighth month, between Haggai's promise to the discouraged builders and his last prophecies. The next date given in Zechariah is two months later than the last in Haggai, while his last prophecies are ascribed to a time when the temple builders have been at work a little more than two years. Zechariah's symbolic imagery, reminding us of that of Ezekiel, is in marked contrast to the plain, matter-of-fact utterances of his fellow laborers. Indeed, Haggai and Zechariah must have supplemented each other admirably in the work that they accomplished together. There seems every reason to regard Haggai as a layman, but Zechariah was, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, of priestly family, being the son of the priest Iddo who returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel and Joshua.

The revolts throughout the empire, that, in all prob-

ability, led the Jews to hope for independence and caused them to lend a ready ear to **The Times** Haggai's predictions as to Zerubbabel, were temporarily quelled, soon after the temple building began. With this quenching of excited expectations, the temple builders must have felt again that the time had not yet come for accomplishing their work.

At this juncture, Zechariah delivered his series of visions to urge forward their great labor. His first oracle **The Message** had been a warning to his generation drawn from the sad fate of their disobedient fathers, framed in the simplest of speech; now he adopts elaborate symbolism to interest and impress his hearers. The first vision, that of the angelic horsemen, recognizes the existing peace which seems so contrary to Haggai's prediction that soon Jehovah would shake the nations, and so destructive to the hope that Israel would become independent under Zerubbabel. The prophet is undismayed by the situation and gives firmest assurance that Jehovah is displeased with the nations which are at ease, that he has returned to Jerusalem, that the temple shall be rebuilt, and that the cities of Judah shall yet overflow with prosperity. The vision fades into another, wherein the prophet sees four horns, symbols of the nations that have scattered Judah, and four smiths who are to cast down the horns of these nations. The third vision is the sequel of the first. A young man goes forth to mark out the boundaries of the restored Jerusalem; he is taught that the city of the future is not to be a narrowly walled fortress; but a great, wide-spread-

ing community, for which Jehovah himself will be a wall of fire round about. The vision is followed by a song urging the exiles to come back from Babylon to Jerusalem, where Jehovah is to dwell and where many nations shall come to join themselves to him. The old doctrine that Haggai had adopted, the doctrine that material misfortune is the sign of divine disapproval, weighed heavily upon the people for whom prosperity delayed her coming so long. The next vision symbolized Jehovah's forgiveness and removal of the people's sin. Joshua, the high priest, stood clothed in filthy rags, the garment of the people's sin, accused before Jehovah by the adversary; then exonerated and clothed with new garments. Obedience to Jehovah is declared to be all that is necessary to bring in the promised Messianic age. The vision of the golden candlestick, which follows, seems to typify the inpouring of the divine Spirit through the civil and religious heads of the restored community, making the completion of the temple possible. This great work is to be brought to a successful conclusion under Zerubbabel, not by might, nor by power, but by Jehovah's Spirit. The sixth vision reiterates the teaching of Ezekiel that henceforth the curse of sin shall fall upon the sinner and not on the community as a whole. The next vision represents wickedness shut up in a great measuring vessel and borne away from Palestine to Babylon. Not only the curse of sin, but sin itself, is removed from the community laboring faithfully to fulfil God's behest. The eighth and last vision bears a certain resemblance to the first in its symbolism of horses going beyond the confines of

Palestine. In the first, however, the horsemen brought news of peace throughout the world, while, in this, the horses are attached to war chariots and go forth to execute vengeance, especially upon Persia. Thus, the visions center in the hope of a glorious future for Jerusalem, with its temple restored, its enemies destroyed, its exiles returned, its sin forgiven, its wickedness removed, and with Jehovah's Spirit flowing in through priest and prince of Davidic line. The visions lead on to the symbolic crowning of the living Davidic representative, as the promised ruler.

In the oracles that follow, the prophet turns from symbolism of vision and of act to simple practical exhortation and encouraging promises. His exhortation repeats the old message of the earliest writing prophets, the message of justice, mercy, and truth, rather than ceremonial. His promise repeats the picture of restored Jerusalem, a city of wondrous peace, whither the nations of the world come to seek Jehovah.

The message of Zechariah is rich and full, for the prophet has drunk deep from the well-springs of earlier prophecy. He has caught the ethical truth of Israel's great eighth century prophets and has enriched it by the spiritual insight of Jeremiah and the glorious hopes of the exilic prophets. His symbolism, to be sure, does not appeal to our present-day modes of thought as illuminating. The pictorial form of the teaching, however, doubtless made his message impressive to the men of his own generation to whom the symbols were familiar, borrowed, as they were, from Ezekiel or, like Ezekiel's,

adopted from the impressive outward features of the life of the day. ¹

Haggai labored simply to get the temple built. Zechariah cooperated in this great work and also impressed upon the builders those moral and spiritual truths without which the temple and its worship would be hollow mockery.

II. ANALYSIS OF LESSON

Lessons from the Past (second year of Darius, eighth month).—1: 1-6.

Symbolic Visions (second year of Darius, eleventh month).—1: 7-6: 8.

The angelic horsemen.—1: 7-17.

The four horns and their destruction.—1: 18-21.

The man measuring Jerusalem.—2: 1-5.

Song of the restoration.—2: 6-13.

The high priest and Satan.—3.

The candlestick and olive-trees.—4.

The flying roll.—5: 1-4.

Wickedness shut up in an ephah measure.—5: 5-11.

The four chariots.—6: 1-8.

Symbolic Crowning of the Prince.¹—6: 9-15.

Right Conduct vs. Ceremonialism.—7.

The Glorious Future of Jerusalem.—8.

Chapters 9-14 are not included in the present study. It is generally agreed among Old Testament scholars that they form a sep-

¹ The text of this passage has clearly suffered corruption. As it stands, it is impossible to find any reference for "both" at the end of verse 13. We should probably read "Zerubbabel" for "Joshua" in verse 11, and "shall be priest on his right hand" (referring to Joshua) for "shall sit and rule upon his throne" (verse 13). For discussion, see George Adam Smith, "Book of the Twelve Prophets," II, 309.

arate and anonymous prophecy, or collection of prophecies. They cannot be dated with certainty, but probably belong to a time long after that of Zechariah.

Home Readings.—The entire eighth chapter should be read with the summary of the visions given under "The Message" and the above "Analysis" as a guide, or the following typical passages may be selected: (1) 1: 1-6; (2) 2: 1-13; (3) 3; (4) 4; (5) 5: 1-11; (6) 7; (7) 8.

III. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN PREPARATION

Relation of Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 5: 1; 6: 14; Hag. 2: 1; Zech. 1: 1; Hag. 2: 10; Zech. 1: 7; 7: 1); Zechariah's family (Neh. 12: 1-4, 12, 16); moral and spiritual preparation for the glorious future taught in the visions; Zechariah's expectation of the "Branch" (6: 12); moral requirements of Jehovah (7: 9, 10; 8: 16, 17); Jerusalem's future (8: 3-5, 12, 22, 23); emphasis upon presence of Spirit (4: 6, 7).

IV. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

The relation of Haggai and Zechariah as stated in Ezra, as indicated in the dates attached to their prophecies; differences in the methods of the two; the family of Zechariah, of Haggai; cause for discouragement of temple builders found in conditions of Persian empire; historical occasion for Zechariah's visions; subject of Zechariah's first prophecy; teaching of the visions as to Israel's enemies, as to the moral and spiritual conditions necessary in the city of Jehovah's abode, as to the glories of Jerusalem's future; relation of first and last visions; meaning of the symbolic crowning; Zechariah's estimate of relative value of ceremonial and moral conduct; his ideal for Jerusalem, for the nations; the real breadth and depth of Zechariah's work compared with that of Haggai; the use of the practical man of affairs in God's work, illustrated from Haggai; the danger of the mere man of affairs, illustrated from a comparison of Haggai and Zechariah (note especially the motives to which each appealed).

LESSON XX ¹

MALACHI

Suggestions for Review.—The especial work of Zechariah; his method of teaching; his teaching as to morals, spiritual power, the future of Jerusalem, the future of Jehovah's religion.

I. THE PROPHET AND HIS WORK

The title Malachi means my messenger. It is probably not a proper name, but suggested by 3 : 1. Haggai is once designated as Jehovah's malach, **The Man** messenger (Hag. 1 : 13). The author of this prophecy labored, it would seem, shortly before the great reform of Nehemiah and Ezra, preparing the way for their rigorous measures in repression of foreign marriages and in providing for the suitable maintenance of temple worship. The manner of his teaching is very different from that of any earlier prophet and suggests that of Israel's later rabbinical teachers. It is not the orator and poet, or the seer of strange visions, who speaks in Malachi, but the methodical teacher who states each time a general principle, then raises a possible objection, and, in meeting this, illustrates his principle by concrete examples which lead into the personal application of his truth. The method is rigid and prosaic, but it makes the truth clear and impressive.

In spirit "Malachi" rises as a true prophet of old above the despair and indifference of his contemporaries, and, with a reformer's zeal, attacks the sin of the people

and of the religious authorities of his day. Yet, he is no narrow reformer, for, in the midst of his teachings, we come upon an utterance that almost staggers us by its breadth. He recognizes that there is worship among the Gentiles which, in its sincerity, is acceptable to Jehovah.¹

After the last message of Zechariah, some seventy years pass by to which we cannot ascribe, with certainty, any prophetic utterance. These years must have been marked by deep disappointment. The temple had been completed and yet the precious things of all nations had not been poured into Jerusalem, nor had the anticipations roused by Haggai and Zechariah for the glorious rule of a son of David been realized. The little community enjoyed a large measure of local freedom, but still it was subject to a foreign power, and had to meet its burden of taxation to a foreign government. The people may have made some attempt to reconstruct the city's walls after completing the temple, but, if so, the attempt had proved unsuccessful and Jerusalem lay open, incapable of defense. The half heathen Samaritan neighbors on the north were, apparently, stronger and more prosperous than the Jews.

¹ In the Hebrew the tense is present throughout 1:11. Our English versions vary between translating it literally and changing to a future, interpreting the present as a vivid anticipation of the future Messianic age. If we are justified in understanding the present literally, the passage is an anticipation of the splendid catholicity seen a little later in the author of Jonah. If the passage is merely predictive, it still shows the writer's breadth of view to be great, for he recognizes that the Gentiles will be able to make acceptable offerings to Jehovah *in every place* and not exclusively in Jerusalem.

Indeed, many of the Jews were divorcing their wives in order to make favorable marriage alliances with their neighbors. The prophet's statement that Jehovah loved Israel was met with scepticism. To the people, it seemed that Jehovah favored the man who did evil, rather than the just man. They declared that it was vain to serve God and that no profit came to them because they had kept his charge. With such scepticism prevailing, it is not strange that the worship rendered to Jehovah was half-hearted. The priests offered polluted bread upon the altar, and presented in sacrifice blind, lame, and sick animals, such as they would not dare to present to their Persian governor. The people kept back a part of their tithes, thus robbing God of his portion.

In such a time the prophet lived, and to these disheartening conditions he addressed himself, trying, line upon line, to teach Jehovah's love, to impress

The Message moral and religious obligations and to warn of judgment to come. In the contrasted lot of Israel and Edom, he finds proof of Jehovah's care for his people. By a comparison between the offerings made to Jehovah and to the governor, or between Israel's faithless worship and the sacrifice of sincere Gentiles, he seeks to make plain the sin of the priests. In the light of God's fatherhood of Israel, he interprets the villainy of the prevalent divorce, and marriage with the daughter of a strange god. Indeed, his teaching on the subject of divorce is second only to that of Jesus. In firm faith that Jehovah does rule in the affairs of men and does require right conduct among them, he denounces the scep-

ticism of his day, and gives assurance that a book of remembrance is written before God for them that fear him.

The prophets of the early years of restoration exulted in the thought that Israel's sin had been purged away by her exile and that now her glorious hopes were to be realized in fullest measure. In Malachi's day, the years have shown that sin still dwells in the people, and the new prophet of righteousness sees that the process of separation between the righteous remnant and the sinful must go on. The day of Jehovah's judgment, the day that shall consume the wicked, root and branch, is yet to come. But, to those who fear Jehovah's name, the sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in its wings. In the meantime, duty lies in observing the law. Before the great and terrible day of Jehovah comes, prophecy shall return, in the spirit of its first great representative, to make the effort for man's conversion before the curse falls.

II. ANALYSIS OF LESSON

Title.—1: 1.

Jehovah's Love.—1: 2-5.

Unworthy Priests.—1: 6-2: 9.

Heathen Intermarriage and Divorce.—2: 10-16.

Scepticism.—2: 17-3: 6.

Robbing Jehovah in Heave Offerings and Tithes.—3: 7-12.

Scepticisms.—3: 13-15.

The Book of Remembrance.—3: 16, 17.

The Great and Terrible Day.—4.

Home Readings.—The prophecy may be assigned to the days of the week as follows: (1) 1: 1-5; (2) 1: 6-2: 9; (3) 2: 10-16; (4) 2: 17-3: 6; (5) 3: 7-12; (6) 3: 13-17; (7) 4.

III. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN PREPARATION

Abuses attacked by Malachi compared with those attacked by Nehemiah and Ezra (Neh. 10: 30; 13: 23, 31; Ezra 9: 2; 10: 3; 16-44); Malachi's catholicity (1: 11); heathen marriages (2: 11); divorce prevalent (2: 14); doubt as to Jehovah's love for Israel (1: 2); Jehovah favorable to wicked (2: 17; 3: 14, 15); unworthy service of Jehovah (1: 7, 8; 3: 10); the prophet's insistence on Jehovah's love for Israel (1: 2-4); his teaching as to unworthy offerings (1: 8-11; 3: 7, 8); teaching as to divorce (2: 10, 14-16); Jehovah's care for those that fear him (3: 16, 17; 4: 2); Jehovah's judgment yet to come (4: 1, 6); emphasis on keeping law (4: 4); prophetic warning before the great and terrible day (4: 5).

IV. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

Meaning of title Malachi; probable date of prophecy; relation of this prophet's work to that of Nehemiah and Ezra; difference in method of teaching between Malachi and earlier prophets; the prophetic spirit of the writer; his breadth of view; discouraging experiences between time of Zechariah and that of Malachi; dangerous social tendency in Malachi's time; skeptical views of the age; character of worship in Jerusalem; the relation of Malachi's teaching to the conditions of his time; arguments by which he tries to show love of Jehovah, contemptibleness of the service that is rendered to him; teaching on divorce; teaching as to divine Providence; teaching in regard to Jehovah's judgment; attitude toward Mosaic law; the coming prophet and his mission; lessons suggested by Malachi as to whole-hearted service, faith in Jehovah's care for man, mutual encouragement among Jehovah's true followers.

LESSON XXI

ISAIAH 56-66

Suggestions for Review.—The abuses attacked in Malachi ; relation of the prophet's work to that of Nehemiah and Ezra ; positive duties insisted upon in Malachi.

I. THE PROPHET AND HIS WORK

In passing from chapter 55 to 56 of the book of Isaiah one feels a strong contrast in the tone and spirit of the writing. Instead of a messenger of hope, whose song of comfort and cheer rings out, we have the words of a practical teacher dealing with questions that must arise in the restored community, or a stern reformer severely denouncing ritual and moral sin. Later on, there are reminders of the triumph songs of "the great unknown" and of "the servant passages." Then come cries for mercy from a penitent people and visions of new heavens and a new earth. It is not possible to say that these are not the words of the author of 40-55 simply because they differ in thought, style and spirit from his utterances ; still the whole section is disconnected and it is extremely difficult to fit some parts of these last eleven chapters into the closing years of exile or even the years immediately following. It is very probable that we are to recognize in this disconnected series of messages the work of one or more prophets who labored in Israel during the restoration period and, with Malachi, helped in the great movement of reform which

we connect so exclusively with the names of Nehemiah and Ezra.

If this is the case, the times are, in the main, essentially the same as those considered in the preceding lesson. Chapters 56-59 seem to be addressed to the Palestinian community after the rebuilding of the temple and before the work of Nehemiah has been accomplished. The people are indifferent and dejected. The rulers are unworthy; blind and dumb watchmen seeking only their own gain. Licentious worship, such as characterized pre-exilic days, is practised, and social anarchy exists, with its injustice and violence. Chapters 60-62, on the other hand, are full of hope. There is a notable absence of attack on moral or ritual error, and a strong sense of Jehovah's favor. Beyond this the background is not very manifest, although some verses may indicate that the temple is built, and one passage suggests that Nehemiah's building of the walls is not yet accomplished. Possibly these chapters reflect the effect of the first coming of Nehemiah on the prophet's hopes. Chapters 65 and 66 seem to find their best explanation in the separation which Nehemiah instituted between the Jews and the Samaritans, who had free access to the temple before the city walls were rebuilt. In 63 and 64 the picture is very different. The temple is burned and Zion is become a wilderness. This suggests the days of exile, but the statement that Jehovah's people possessed their sanctuary a little while and then adversaries trod it down seems to fit better with some devastation after the rebuilding;

possibly, it was during the persecution by Artaxerxes Ochus, near the close of the Persian rule.

This series of oracles opens with a message of emphasis upon righteousness and Sabbath observance, as the

The Message ground of true participation in the privileges of Jehovah's people. A severe denunciation of the selfishness and incapacity of the Jewish rulers follows. The immoral superstitions of Israel's neighbors are next rebuked and a promise is given to the contrite and humble. The message that follows, with its scorn for the folly of expecting Jehovah's favor because of solemn fast with bowed head, sackcloth and ashes, instead of mercy to the poor and oppressed, reminds one of Amos, Hosea, and Micah, or perhaps more closely resembles Zechariah 7 : 1-10. A new message of emphasis upon Sabbath observance ensues; then the prophet declares that Jehovah and his people have been separated by sin. Violence and lies are rampant, therefore are they in darkness and misery. Jehovah himself will come in judgment. He will establish his covenant, the keeping of his words for generations to come.

Israel shall be exalted above all nations; they shall upbuild and serve her. Zion, that has been forsaken, shall be glorious. Wealth will pour in to her; Jehovah himself will be her light; peace and righteousness shall dwell within her. The messenger is divinely endowed to preach good tidings of comfort and liberty. Judæa shall be gloriously restored and Israel recognized as Jehovah's priests, blessed of him. In him is joy. Jerusalem shall

be known as Jehovah's delight. Zion's salvation cometh. The context is interrupted, at this point, by a brief prophecy dealing with Jehovah's vengeance upon Edom. Then the thought returns to Jerusalem. Israël possessed her sanctuary a little while only and adversaries trod it down. The prophet voices the cry of the people to Jehovah, recalling his past deliverances and humbly seeking pity as Judæa and Jerusalem lie desolate, and the temple is burned with fire. Jehovah has been accessible even to those who have despised his ordinances, but now they shall be cut off. He will create new heavens and a new earth. In Jerusalem shall be joy and all shall be at peace. Jehovah desires not a material house but a penitent and humble spirit. Jerusalem shall be comforted. The nations shall be punished, Jehovah's glory made known to the ends of the earth, and the despised of Israel restored from all lands. The new heavens and new earth shall remain, and all flesh shall come to worship before Jehovah and be warned by the dread fate of those who have transgressed against him.

II. ANALYSIS OF LESSON

Ground of Participation with Jehovah's People.—56 : 1-8.

Denunciation of Rulers and False Worshipers—Promise.—56:9-57.

Mercy rather than Sacrifice.—58 : 1-12.

Promise to those who Keep the Sabbath.—58 : 13, 14.

Present Sin and Misery—Future Judgment and Blessings.—59.

Jerusalem's Future Glory.—60-62.

Jerusalem upbuilded and Jehovah in her midst.—60.

The messenger of good tidings.—61 : 1-3.

Israel recognized as Jehovah's people.—61 : 4-62.

Vengeance on Edom.—63: 1-6.

Judah's Present Devastation.—63: 7-64.

Jerusalem's Future Glory.—65, 66.

A new dispensation in Jerusalem.—65.

True worship and superstition.—66: 1-5, 17, 18a.

Jerusalem the center of the world's worship, 66: 6-16, 18b-24.

Home Readings.—The entire section 56-66 may well be read with the aid of the above analysis, or the following selections may be made for daily reading of Scripture: (1) 56: 1-8; (2) 58: 1-12; (3) 59; (4) 60: 1-14; (5) 61; (6) 65; (7) 66: 1, 2, 15-24.

III. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN PREPARATION

Indifference and dejection (57: 1; 58: 3); unworthy rulers (56: 9, 11); licentious worship (57: 5); anarchy (59: 3, 7, 11); walls apparently not yet built (60: 10); devastation of the land (64: 10, 11; 63: 18); moral demands of Jehovah (56: 1; 59: 1-4; 61: 8); emphasis upon Sabbath (56: 2, 6; 58: 13, 14; 59: 13-15); emphasis on penitence and humility (57: 15; 66: 2); mercy rather than sacrifice (58: 5-8; Amos 5: 21-24; Hosea 6: 6; Micah 6: 8; Zechariah 7: 1-10); Jehovah's judgment (59: 17-19); Jehovah's covenant (59: 21); dispersed of Israel restored (66: 20); nations drawn to Jerusalem (60: 3, 10, 11, 14; 66: 23, etc.); spiritual glory of Jerusalem 60: 18-22; 62: 12; 66: 22, 23); the messenger of good tidings (61: 1-3); Jehovah's glory to the ends of the earth (66: 18, 19).

IV. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

Difference in tone between Isaiah 40-55 and 56-66; the probability as to authorship of 56-66, as to date; grounds of participation in privileges of Jehovah's people; grounds of denunciation of rulers; character of those who obtain Jehovah's promise; prophetic teaching as to true method of securing Jehovah's favor repeated in Isaiah 58; real cause of separation between Jehovah

and people; result of establishing covenant; chief elements in picture of Jerusalem's future; that which Jehovah desires rather than a material house; chief elements in the message of good tidings of chapter 61; the future of Jehovah's religion in the world; the most important truths for our personal lives taught in Isaiah 56-66.

IV. Prophets of the Age of Legalism

LESSON XXII

JOEL

Suggestions for Review.—Probability as to authorship and date of Isaiah 56-66; Jerusalem's future pictured in these chapters; some great moral truths taught in them.

I. THE PROPHET AND HIS WORK

Joel was completely saturated with the writings of the prophets who preceded him, his words exhibiting the closest parallels to passages from many of these. His thought, however, is dominated by the priestly spirit, rather than that of the early ethical prophets. When gaunt famine threatens the land and Jehovah's hand seems heavy in judgment, his grief is that the sacrifices cannot be offered and his call is, not to moral reformation, but to a fast and solemn assembly. In this respect, he presents a marked contrast to Ezekiel, Zechariah, and the author of Isaiah 56-66, whom we have seen combining the moral demands of early prophecy with prominent recognition of priestly institutions.

We have reached the age of legalism established by the reforms of Nehemiah and Ezra. When the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt, and the Levitical law first completely carried out in the life of the community, a half century of comparative pros-

perity ensued. Now, at last, it must have seemed that Jehovah's favor was being secured, and that the one thing needful for his people was to observe rigidly all his ritual ordinances. Suddenly, one of those locust plagues, which occasionally devastate Palestine, threatens the little struggling community with starvation. The vine is laid waste, the fig-tree stands with white, barked branches, adding desolation to the scene. The wheat and the barley are perished, the new wine and oil fail, the pomegranate, the palm, and the apple, even all the trees of the field are withered. There is nothing from which to furnish the meat-offering and the drink-offering of the temple. As so often happens after such a pest, the dry stubble left has been burned by drought or fire, so that the pastures of the wilderness are consumed. This is the scene with which the book of Joel opens.¹

The prophets have long predicted the coming of Jehovah's great and terrible day. Joel declares it now

The Message nigh at hand, for a devastation such as no man can recall is upon the land. In vivid, concrete pictures, he presents the misery and suffering that have fallen upon all classes of the community. He describes the resistless advance of the locust swarms in highly poetic language that, nevertheless, quite accurately pictures similar devastations which have been witnessed in Palestine within the last century of our own era.

¹ The locust plague in Joel is sometimes interpreted as the figurative presentation of a devastating human army, but the considerations in favor of a literal interpretation seem overwhelmingly strong.

Joel, like the prophets of old, finds in the events of his day the great judgment of Jehovah and cries out that even yet, if they will turn with all their heart unto God, who is gracious and merciful, they may be delivered. Here the resemblance to the prophets of an earlier age ceases. They would have called for repentance, for a change in moral conduct, while Joel calls for observance of religious ceremonies, a fast and solemn assembly with weeping and prayer by the priests who stand between the temple porch and altar. The ceremony is performed, and glad assurance of Jehovah's favor comes to his stricken people. Rains fall, and all the land gives promise of abundant harvest which will restore the years that the locust has eaten.

From the restoration of physical plenty, the prophet passes to contemplation of the deeper riches of the coming age when the Spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh; and he recalls that before Jehovah's great judgment comes, there shall be warning, and all who call on Jehovah's name shall escape. He finally passes on to the thought which had been growing more prominent from Ezekiel's day forward, that Jehovah's great day is to be a day of judgment upon the nations when he shall be a stronghold to the children of Israel. Then it will be recognized that God dwells in Zion and no strangers shall pass through Jerusalem any more. Ancient enemies that have done violence to the children of Judah shall be desolate; Judah shall abide forever.

The book of Joel is a monument of the intense faith of Judaism in the efficiency of the perfect observance of

outward forms. It marks a long step toward the pathetic struggle of sincere souls, in still later centuries, to fulfil God's will by perfect observance of ritual. In estimating the significance of Joel, it must not be forgotten that Judaism was soon to pass through trials demanding intensest devotion to the outer forms of her religion. Without such adherence, for which prophecy had begun to prepare the way as early as Ezekiel, Judaism must have disappeared in the two or three centuries after Joel's age. Again we follow the guiding hand shaping Israel's ideals, through the prophets, until the fulness of time shall come for bursting the protecting wall of formalism and ritual exclusiveness.

II. ANALYSIS OF LESSON

Title.—1: 1.

The Day of Jehovah upon Israel.—1: 2-2: 11.

Seeking unto Jehovah.—2: 12-17.

Restoration of Fertility.—2: 18-27.

Outpouring of Spirit.—2: 28-32.

Day of Jehovah on the Nations.—3: 1-16a.

Jehovah a Refuge.—3: 16b-21.

Home Readings.—The book of Joel may conveniently be divided, for daily reading of Scripture, as follows: (1) 1: 1-12; (2) 1: 13-2: 3; (3) 2: 4-17; (4) 2: 18-27; (5) 2: 28-32; (6) 3: 1-16a; (7) 3: 16b-21.

III. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN PREPARATION

Some passages that show influence of earlier prophets on Joel's language (3: 16, cf. Amos 1: 2; 3: 10, cf. Isa. 2: 4, Mic. 4: 3; 2: 2, cf. Zeph. 1: 15; 1: 15, cf. Isa. 13: 6, etc.); circumstances that called

forth Joel's message (1: 2, 4, 7, 9, 10, etc.); Joel's first interpretation of the devastation (2: 1, 2, 11); description of the coming of the locusts (2: 4-10); hope of averting destruction (2: 12-14); means of averting (2: 12, 13a, 15-17); effect of means employed (2: 18); the outpouring of the Spirit (2: 28, 29); warning before great and terrible day (2: 30, 31, cf. Mal. 4: 5); day of judgment on the nations (3: 2, 12, 13); Jerusalem inviolate (3: 17).

IV. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

Influence of earlier prophets upon Joel; limits of this influence and real spirit that dominates the prophecy; gradual growth of priestly element in prophecy; probable location of Joel in Jewish history; immediate occasion of Joel's prophecy; Joel's first interpretation of the calamity that befel Judæa; the means of averting the trouble urged by Joel; contrast to teaching of earlier prophecy; sudden change in the situation; Joel's picture of the coming age; final picture of the day of Jehovah drawn by Joel; the tendency of later Judaism seen in Joel; the historical necessity of this tendency; its dangers, as seen in the Judaism of Christ's day; the hopelessness, for a sincere soul, in a religion of mere formalism.

LESSON XXIII

1

JONAH

Suggestions for Review.—Period of Israel's history in which Joel prophesied; immediate occasion of his prophecy; dominant spirit of the age seen in the prophecy; the conception of the day of Jehovah at the beginning and at the close of the book.

I. THE PROPHET AND HIS WORK

The book of Jonah is quite different from all the other "latter prophets." While they sometimes contain historical and biographical material, this is incidental, for they are primarily collections of the prophets' words. The book of Jonah, on the other hand, is simply a narrative in which the prophet is the central figure.

The Man Jonah, the son of Amittai, is mentioned in Kings as having predicted the national expansion under Jeroboam II. He thus antedated Amos, whom we regard as the earliest of the "writing prophets." The prophet whose character and work we are to consider at this time is not Jonah, but the author of our book of Jonah, whose personality shines through the vivid story as one of the most attractive figures in the company of Israel's prophets.

The book was written, we may be almost sure, during the age of legalism and, probably, even later than Joel. The writer's inspired vision saw the evil side of Jewish exclusiveness only less perfectly than Jesus himself. He had assimilated the thought of Isaiah 40-55, that Israel

was blind to her mission as Jehovah's servant and messenger and that, for her sin, God had given her as a spoil to the robbers. He was capable, in the breadth of his nature, of appreciating that the heathen might be men of sympathy and reverence, and that the God of Israel cared for them with tender pity.

The age in which we place the author of Jonah is that in which Israel's rigid separation from her neighbors and her careful adherence to the details of priestly distinctions have intensified her sense of being peculiarly the people of Jehovah. Her anticipations for the Gentiles are pictured in the last chapter of Joel, their slaughter in the valley of Jehovah's judgment. Very probably the bitter persecution suffered under Artaxerxes Ochus, about 350 B. C., has already had its effect on the national temper.

As the darkness of "the night of legalism" falls, the book of Jonah shines forth, a lone and brilliant star.

The Message The writer tells a vivid story, which proves to be a parable, wherein the outer form symbolizes an inner meaning. This method of teaching had been practiced by some of his predecessors. The hero of the story is one whose name is already familiar as a prophet who had correctly foretold Israel's success against an ancient foe. Not impossibly, some narrative telling of his being sent with a message to a foreign capital had come down through the centuries. The Elisha material in Kings tells of that prophet's delivering an oracle to Hazael, king of Syria, in Damascus. As to this, however, we can do no more than conjecture.

Whatever basis of fact may have been known by the author's contemporaries, the real meaning of the story must have been plain to those who recalled how the earlier prophets had pictured Israel's enemies as great water monsters, and had represented the Babylonian exile as a swallowing up and vomiting forth by Nebuchadnezzar or by the Babylonian god, Bel. If they recalled, also, such a prophecy as that in which Israel is called Jehovah's messenger and servant who is blind, the meaning must have been very plain to Orientals, so fond of symbolic teaching. Jonah is surely Israel, Jehovah's servant and messenger to the world. The messenger has rejected God's will and sought to flee from him. God has prepared the great fish, Babylon, to swallow up the messenger and bring him to penitent submission. Then he cries unto God and is delivered. Now he goes upon his mission sullenly obedient, but with a heart that still dreads Jehovah's mercy to the Gentiles and longs for a day of vengeance upon them, that still cares more for the ephemeral shadow of his own little gourd than for the fate of a great city that perishes without knowledge.

Isaiah had anticipated the day when Egypt and Assyria should worship Jehovah; the author of the "servant passages" had pictured Israel's true service as that of a messenger, and had spoken of the servant as a light to the Gentiles. Malachi had contrasted the half-hearted worship of the Jews with the sincere worship of Gentiles. The nation, however, had delighted in pictures of Jehovah coming in terrible vengeance on the nations, or, at best, bringing them, as humble dependents, to

worship in Jerusalem. The unnamed author of Jonah saw the canker in his nation's life and, full of the noblest thought of the greatest prophets, told his interesting story.

In the opening section of the story, the trust of the heathen sailors in their gods and their courageous efforts to save Jonah are in noble contrast to Jonah-Israel's faithlessness to God and indifference to the destruction of those of other race and creed. In the third section, the ready repentance of the heathen Ninevites teaches the same broad catholicity of spirit as the first scene. At the end, the wondrous compassion of Jehovah is presented in supreme contrast to the anger and cruelty of Jonah-Israel. Of this gospel message of Israel's mission to the heathen, of Gentile capacity for courage, kindness and repentance, and of God's mercy extending even to the cruelest enemy of Israel, the story of Jonah is the vehicle.¹

II. ANALYSIS OF PROPHECY

Flight and Catastrophe.—1.

Prayer and Deliverance.—2.

Preaching and Repentance.—3.

Cruelty of Jonah and Mercy of God.—4.

Home Readings.—The four chapters form a natural division in the book which may be adopted for daily reading. For the remaining days of the week the following readings are suggested:

¹ Many are troubled in interpreting the story of Jonah, by the thought that Christ's reference to it stamps the narrative as actual history. Such may profitably read the reverent discussion of Prof. George Adam Smith, "Book of the Twelve Prophets," II, 507-509.

(1) Isaiah's hope for the Gentiles, Isa. 2: 2-4; 19: 19-25; (2) Malachi's recognition of Gentile worship, Mal. 1: 6-14; (3) A light to the Gentiles, Isa. 49: 1-7.

1

III. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN PREPARATION

Historical reference to Jonah, son of Amittai, (2 Kings 14: 25); Israel a blind servant and messenger (Isa. 42: 19); Israel's punishment (Isa. 42: 24); the good conduct of the heathen sailors (Jonah 1: 11-13, 5, 6, 16); of the heathen Ninevites (3: 5-9); Jehovah's compassion on the heathen (3: 10; 4: 2, 11); prophetic use of the parable, (Isa. 5: 1-7, etc.); Israel's enemies pictured as water monster (Isa. 26: 21; 27: 1; 51: 9, 10); Babylonian exile pictured as swallowing up and belching forth (Jer. 51: 34, 44); earlier expressions of hope for Gentiles, see "Home Readings"; Jonah's cruel attitude toward the Gentiles (4: 1-4).

IV. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

Difference between Jonah and other books of the "latter prophets"; date and message of the historical Jonah of 2 Kings; who is the true prophet whose personality and message are found in the book of Jonah? date of the writer; beautiful elements in his character; evil elements in the Judaism of his age; symbolic teaching, especially in the form of parable, in the Bible; possible traditional basis for story of Jonah; Israel's previous familiarity with the imagery of the story of Jonah; the meaning of the story, if it is interpreted as a parable; earlier prophetic hopes for the Gentiles reinterpreted to the narrow age of legalism; different anticipations for the Gentiles current in Judah; the contrast drawn in the story between the Gentiles and Jonah-Israel, between Jehovah and Jonah-Israel; gospel truth found in the book of Jonah; is this truth in the narrative, whether it be interpreted as literal history or parable? reasons why this glorious truth in the book has so often been lost sight of; do we Christians ever fall into anything of the spirit against which the book of Jonah protests?

LESSON XXIV

DANIEL 1-6

Suggestions for Review.—Probable date of writing Jonah; the nature of the narrative; sins of Israel against which the book is directed; the great truths of the book.

I. THE APOCALYPSE OF DANIEL

In the Hebrew Bible, the book of Daniel is not grouped with the prophetic books but is placed in the third collection of writings that make up the canon. This is probably due to the fact that Daniel was written after the collection of prophetic writings was completed. Yet the book does differ very much from the earlier books of prophecy, even though it is, in many characteristics, the natural culmination of tendencies that we have seen developing in prophecy. These tendencies concern both form and substance. In literary form, Daniel is the full realization of the trend toward symbolic vision which was so prominent in Ezekiel and Zechariah, and which had appeared in germ as early as Amos, himself. In thought, the book is the culmination of the fondness for picturing a great day of Jehovah's sudden judgment upon the nations gathered against his people. Ezekiel's prophecy against the mysterious Gog stands as the great prototype of this kind of vision, while there are conspicuous examples in Zechariah 9-14 and Joel. The germ of this tendency, too, may be found in pre-exilic prophecy.

The Greek name apocalypse (meaning disclosure, or revelation), is commonly applied to the type of writing represented by Daniel. The type¹ became extremely popular in the days of later Judaism and was even adopted by the early Christians, as the Book of Revelation in the New Testament indicates. One characteristic of the fully developed apocalypse, which distinguishes it from the earlier prophetic writings with apocalyptic tendencies, is the custom of putting the words into the mouth of some ancient worthy, who is represented as describing events of history under symbolic forms, and as though in a vision of the future. Thus, a whole apocalyptic literature attached itself to the name of Enoch, "the seventh from Adam." The course of history is usually followed down to the time of the writer, sometimes with much detail, and then the vision goes on to the anticipated day of Jehovah's judgment upon the nations.

II. THE PROPHET AND HIS WORK

Many lines of evidence lead to the conclusion that the Book of Daniel was written long after the period to which

The Man Daniel's life is ascribed. The writer probably wrote in the second century B. C. and attached his apocalypse to an ancient worthy, Daniel, who is mentioned in Ezekiel, along with Noah and Job, as a type of a righteous man and, in another passage, as a wise man (Ezek. 14 : 14, 20 ; 28 : 3).

With Alexander's conquest of the Persian empire, the Jews fell under Greek rule, after two centuries of subjec-

The Times tion to Persia. After Alexander's death and the breaking up of his kingdom, when matters at length became somewhat settled, Judæa found itself a dependency of the Ptolemies of Egypt, and enjoyed an era of prosperity such as had not been experienced in many long years. A century later, Antiochus the Great transferred Palestine to the Seleucid Kingdom, the capital of which was Antioch, in northern Syria. Contact with Greek civilization was rapidly Hellenizing the Judæan community. All the walls of separation that Nehemiah and Ezra had built were now needed to keep the community from absorption by the cultured heathen life about it. Still the Jewish life was not assimilated rapidly enough to suit Antiochus Epiphanes, who ascended the throne in 176 B. C. He undertook to destroy all vestiges of distinctive Jewish life and thus to Hellenize the whole people by force. The temple was plundered, all copies of the law that could be found were destroyed, observance of the Sabbath, the sacred feasts, and the right of circumcision were forbidden on penalty of death. All were compelled to take part in heathen sacrifice, the temple was polluted with the blood of unclean animals, and an altar of Zeus, "the abomination of desolation," was set up on the site of the great altar of Jehovah. It was near the close of 168 B. C. that the worship of Jehovah ceased in the temple. The book of Daniel was, in all probability, written between this time and the death of Antiochus in 164.

The first six chapters consist of a series of narratives concerning the experiences of Daniel as an exile in Bab-

ylonia. They tell of the steadfastness of the young Jewish captive and his three friends, in keeping themselves from defilement with food that might have been consecrated to heathen deities. They narrate the marvelous deliverance of the three friends, who refuse to worship the golden image set up by Nebuchadnezzar ; and of Daniel when he is cast into the lions' den for praying to his God. All of these narratives have the most evident bearing upon the circumstances of the time when the book was written. They are designed to lead the readers to a like steadfast refusal to abandon Jewish rites and customs and recognize heathen deities. Mingled with these stories of faithfulness are accounts of Daniel's God-given wisdom in the interpretation of vision and dream. Of these latter, the most interesting is that recorded in the second chapter, Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image. Considering this vision by itself alone, it is not possible to determine just what nations are intended, but, when it is studied in connection with chapters 7-12, it becomes highly probable that the succession is Babylonia, Media, Persia, and Macedonia, the last being divided into the kingdoms of the Ptolemies and Seleucids. Whether or not this is the correct interpretation of the kingdoms, there can be no question that the stone which destroys the image is the kingdom of God. This chapter forms the only strictly apocalyptic section in the first half of Daniel. Brief as it is, it has the characteristics of apocalypse in its obscure and difficult symbolism, recording the course of history and terminating with Jehovah's judgment upon

the world powers. The remaining narratives of chapters 1-6, Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the tree and the handwriting on the wall, seem designed to enforce the truth of God's rule over the kingdoms of the earth. All three of the accounts concerning dream and vision show much the same purpose as those first considered, namely, to comfort and strengthen those who are enduring terrible persecution when the power of the heathen oppressor seems resistless.

III. ANALYSIS OF LESSON

Refusal of the King's Food.—1.

The Dream of the Image.—2.

Refusal to Worship the Golden Image.—3.

The Dream of the Tree.—4.

The Handwriting on the Wall.—5.

Faithfulness in Prayer to God.—6.

Home Readings.—The entire section may easily be read during the week, or the following selections may be made: (1) 1: 8-21; (2) 2: 31-45; (3) 3: 1-12; (4) 3: 13-27; (5) 4: 19-27; (6) 5: 17-28; (7) 6: 10-23.

IV. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN PREPARATION

A reading of the selections indicated under "Home Readings" will suffice to make intelligible the points treated under II.

V. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

Place of Daniel in the Hebrew Bible; two apocalyptic tendencies seen in prophetic books that antedate Daniel; a characteristic of apocalypse, not seen in strictly prophetic books; time of writing Daniel in relation to time when Daniel's life is placed; outline history of Greek rule over Judah; effect of Greek civilization on

Judaism ; the attempt of Antiochus Epiphanes ; the means he employed ; exact time to which writing of Daniel should be ascribed ; the three narratives of steadfastness in Daniel 1-6 ; their appropriateness in the time of the writing ; the dream of the image and its interpretation ; apocalyptic character of this narrative ; significance of narratives of the dream of the tree and of the writing on the wall ; relation of the narratives of the dreams and the writing on the wall to the circumstances of the Jews under Antiochus ; what religious truths important for all ages are conveyed by the stories of Daniel 1-6.

LESSON XXV

DANIEL 7-12

Suggestions for Review.—Three or four characteristics of apocalyptic literature ; probable date of writing Daniel ; circumstances of the time ; purpose of chapters 1-6 in relation to these circumstances.

I. THE PROPHET AND HIS WORK

In the last lesson the author of Daniel was seen seeking to bring comfort to his countrymen in the time of their deepest distress, and to strengthen them to remain loyal to their religion. **The Man** The self-restraint of one who could write under such monstrous persecution and show so little of bitter hatred is most notable. In the more purely apocalyptic sections that constitute the latter half of the book, the same moderation is manifest. Even when the writer has been recounting the persecution and blasphemy of Antiochus and comes to predict the end of this "contemptible person," there is no reveling in the blood of enemies. The grandly simple statement is, "He shall come to his end, and none shall help him." With this, and nothing more, he passes on to the reward of those who have been faithful. The lofty soul of this writer seems to turn, far more readily, to thoughts of the noble ones who endure persecution, than to anticipations of vengeance on his nation's enemies.

The present section of the book carries us into the de-

tails of the long struggle for the possession of Palestine,

The Times between the Seleucids and Ptolemies (kings of the north and south) and the final Seleucid rule, down to the breaking out of the Maccabæan revolt in 167 B. C. The point at which the history breaks off makes it extremely probable that the book was written before the successes of Judas Maccabæus had made possible the reinstitution of Jehovah worship in the temple. This was actually accomplished a little more than three years after the setting up of "the abomination of desolation." The death of Antiochus, which is anticipated in Daniel, occurred in the following year.

In the detailed interpretation of the apocalyptic visions of Daniel 2 and 7-12 great difference of opinion has prevailed from early times. In the light of
The Message subsequent history, the last kingdom of chapters 2 and 7 has often been identified with the Roman Empire. Some have thought that the visions contained an outline of history extending on to the papacy or even to times still future. Among modern scholars, the view already suggested in connection with chapter 2, that the last Gentile kingdom in the writer's mind is the Greek, is very generally adopted. It is perfectly clear in the vision of chapter 8 (the ram, goat, and horns) that the little horn which casts down the sanctuary is Antiochus Epiphanes. The little horn of chapter 7 is, in all probability, the same, and if such is the case the succession of beasts represents Babylonia, Media, Persia, and Greece. The ten horns are then the

Seleucid rulers and the claimants for the Seleucid throne whom Antiochus displaces.

Probably the most baffling prophecy of all is that of the seventy weeks. Even in the early centuries of the Church, scholarship was sadly perplexed by the problem. St. Jerome, who knew of nine different interpretations, did not attempt to decide between them. Every explanation meets with difficulties, but the one most commonly held by scholars, to-day, seems the least improbable. According to this, the entire seventy weeks is the period between Jeremiah's predictions that the city would be rebuilt and the end of the persecution of Antiochus. This interpretation accepts the usual view that the "weeks" are weeks of years and identifies the division of the seventy into $7+62+1$ as follows: (1) from Jeremiah's prophecy to the edict of Cyrus permitting the rebuilding, (2) rebuilding to the murder of the high priest Onias III, the "anointed" in 171 B. C., (3) the period of persecution, in the midst of which comes the desecration of the temple. The vision of chapters 10-12 evidently terminates with the death of Antiochus and the blessings to follow.

If these interpretations are right, the vision is one, in all the apocalyptic portions of the book, and is in closest harmony with the narrative portions. Its meaning is, then, primarily for the afflicted sufferers under the persecutions of Antiochus. The prophet tells them, in effect, that God has permitted the succession of great powers to rule over his people from Nebuchadnezzar to Antiochus, but now this subjection is about to end and the rule of

God's saints to be established. The image is to be shattered, the last beast destroyed, the little horn broken without hand, the king of the north, to come to his end. The determined time approaches when the last half of the week of persecution shall end.

Those who have followed a historical study of the development of prophecy and have seen how the prophets ever addressed themselves to the needs of the generation in which they lived, will find this the natural view to take of the primary aim of the book of Daniel. The message of the book is, however, far from exhausted in this primary application. The book speaks to every age the eternal truths of prophecy. When the temple is desolate and an altar to Zeus stands where sacrifice had been offered to Jehovah, when every outward vestige of Jehovah worship is being consumed, and every Jew who refuses to offer heathen sacrifice is cut down, the author of Daniel utters, without any bitterness of malice toward the persecutor, the sublime faith of Israel's prophets, that Jehovah rules through all the centuries and directs the course of empire; that he will deliver his people in his own determined time; and that they who have known him through every peril shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, they who turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.

Whatever may be the true interpretation of the puzzling details of Daniel's visions, the spiritual message of the book is clear. If the prophet was inspired to map out for man's interested gaze the course of future history, then the difficulties of interpreting Daniel's visions may

well leave us perplexed and in doubt. If, on the other hand, prophetic inspiration was such insight into the nature of God as reveals his constant loving purposes and his will for man, then the book of Daniel stands one of the most inspiring monuments of prophetic inspiration.

II. ANALYSIS OF LESSON

The Four Beasts.—7.

The Ram, Goat, and Horns.—8.

The Seventy Weeks.—9.

The Man in Linen.—10-12.

Colloquy with the Angel.—10: 1-11: 1.

History from Darius to Antiochus.—11: 2-45.

The future age.—12.

Home Readings.—The entire section may be read during the week or the following passages may be selected for daily reading: (1) 7: 1-14; (2) 8: 1-14; (3) 9: 20-27; (4) 11: 2-7, 20-27; (5) 11: 28-39; (6) 11: 40-12: 4; (7) 12: 5-12.

III. POINTS TO BE NOTED IN PREPARATION

A careful reading of the selected passages under "Home Readings" will enable one to follow the discussion under "The Prophet and His Work." In addition a detailed comparison of the visions in chapters 2, 7, and 8 will prove especially profitable.

IV. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

A notable feature of the author's spirit; exact date of the book; time of death of Antiochus Epiphanes; most probable view as to the identity of last Gentile kingdom in visions of chapters 2 and 7; certainty as to the historical termination of the vision in chapter 8; probable identification of the three periods included in the seventy

weeks; terminal point in the symbolic account of Gentile history in chapters 10-12; possible unity in the entire message of the book; summary statement of its message for the writer's day; its message for every age; the force added to the message by a knowledge of the circumstances under which it was uttered; danger of losing sight of the deep moral and spiritual truth of a book like Daniel in the discussion of the details of its symbolism; the true revelation of prophecy—a detailed knowledge of what is to happen in future years, or a knowledge of God and his will for man?

LESSON XXVI

REVIEW

I. THE PROPHETS AND THEIR WORK

The twelve lessons now completed have dealt with ten different prophets whose work is distributed over a period

The Men of four and a quarter centuries. This group of prophets is sharply distinguished from those studied in the previous quarter by the changed conditions under which they lived. In large measure, the work of the prophets has ceased to be that of statesmen seeking to mould the national policy of their people, since their people no longer form a nation free to enter into alliance or war with other nations. The prophets now look forward, it is true, to a restored national life and picture it ideally, but the vision tarries, and they address themselves chiefly to building up a religious organization which may preserve the integrity of Jehovah's people while the political organization can be merely that of a little province in a great heathen empire. In the task of developing a compact religious organization, the prophets and priests are united, whereas in the pre-exilic days, conditions required the prophets to minimize or even deny the necessity of priestly ritual. The statesman spirit was not extinct, however, in Israel's prophets, who now manifested it by shaping their teaching to the new needs of the new age.

As preachers, the personality and doctrine of the dif-

ferent men is hardly less striking than in the case of those of the earlier centuries. Ezekiel stands forth alone as the dominating force in shaping the ideals and hopes of Israel to meet the new conditions. He was capable of seeing the spiritual truths that were needed to enable the men of his day to receive aright the discipline that they were experiencing, and also of recognizing the necessity for an impressive religious organization in the days to come. The world has rarely seen a religious teacher combining so fully emphasis upon both elements of religion, its visible body and its inner spirit. Obadiah has left hardly a sufficient record to make his personality distinct, but the author of Isaiah 40-55, in spite of his absorption in his message or because of it, is felt as a personality of the greatest strength and beauty. Haggai stands alone among all the prophets as the type of the plain, practical man who sees the immediate need and meets it; Zechariah labors together with him and, by deep moral and spiritual insight, offsets the dangers of temporary zeal and superficiality that attend the influence of such a man as Haggai. Malachi appears as the opponent of sham and hypocrisy in religion. He lays intense stress upon Judah's preserving her own formal worship with all carefulness, but prefers a whole-hearted heathen to a half-hearted Jew. The section Isaiah 56-66 leaves no very clear impression of one personality behind its many-sided message. If these chapters are, however, the words of one prophet, they show him, by the richness and variety of their spiritual lessons one who is notable in all the company of Israel's prophets. Joel is a

polished student of prophetic letters who has absorbed the figures and expressions of his predecessors, but in spirit shares too much the limitations of his age to attain unto the first rank. Still, he is capable of glorious vision. The author of *Jonah* rises out of the narrowness and bitterness of his age almost to the full gospel vision of the infinite mercy of Jehovah; with what condescension and tact does the writer embody his lofty thought in a homely story that must have impressed his message upon the men of his age! The writer of *Daniel*, in the midst of persecution, thinks only of his harassed countrymen and with supreme faith holds them loyal to their God. His is a nature deep, and strong, and gentle withal.

The period of history covered by the work of these ten has been divided broadly into two parts. The one, ex-

The Times tending from the early years of exile to the reforms of Nehemiah and Ezra, about 150 years, we style the age of exile and restoration; the other, opening with the drastic reforms of Nehemiah and Ezra and including more than two and a half centuries, we denominate the age of legalism. We have seen, however, that both portions of the four centuries under consideration are legalistic in contrast to the spirit of the pre-exilic age.

During the centuries included in the present quarter's study, Israel was successively subject to three great and widely different empires. The first was that of a Semitic people, their own race. The second and third empires were of the Aryan race, wherein Israel formed an alien element. Each different civilization left its deep impres-

sion on the thought and modes of expression of the little subject people which yet, adhering to its own religious faith and practices, retained its identity and national characteristics. The prophetic thought became enriched from many sources, but its vital principle was the same from Elijah and Amos to the authors of Jonah and Daniel.

We have already recalled the general fact that the prophets of the exile and restoration laid stress upon rit-

The Messages ual, in striking contrast to their predecessors of the eighth and seventh centuries.

Ezekiel largely shaped the Levitical tendency of Judaism; Haggai and Zechariah labored for the rebuilding of the temple where the ritual of worship might be perfectly observed. Malachi and, in part, Isaiah 56-66 seem to have aided the Nehemiah-Ezra reforms which made Judaism separate and uncontaminated. Joel emphasized formal worship as the one thing needful in his day. On the other hand, the great body of moral and spiritual truth that we owe to the prophets received great enrichment in this period. Ezekiel saw the individual responsibility of every man, whether prophet or hearer, as no one before him had understood it; the author of the "servant passages" first introduced into this world of struggle for dominance, the thought that the highest achievement is to be found in sacrifice for others. It was in this age that the idea was first expressed of Israel's mission as a light to the Gentiles. The earlier prophets had recognized Jehovah as God of nations, ruling all with even-handed justice, while loving his own people

with an unquenchable love. Malachi declared that sincere Gentiles are acceptable to God and the author of Jonah taught that the God whose just rule extended over the nations looked upon the cruelest of them all in compassion and in readiness to spare them at the first cry of penitence. Out of Hosea's bitter suffering came the first clear message to Israel that the God of justice loved his own unchangeably. Out of the bitter experiences of an oppressed nation whose hope of deliverance was delayed through centuries came the first clear message that the God of Israel looked with compassion upon the heathen.

When Israel was independent and indifferent to her God, the message of prophecy was largely one of threatened judgment. When she was cast down in utter despair, no longer a nation among the nations of earth, the note of hope, never wholly wanting in the prophet's song, became dominant as prophet after prophet caught up the strain through the long night of subjection to foreign domination. Israel's prophets hoped when all others despaired because there had been given to them a vision of the God of Israel as a God of justice, and of compassion upon all mankind.

II. ANALYSIS OF LESSON

III. Prophets of the Exile and Restoration.

1. Ezekiel, the priest prophet.
2. Obadiah, the voice of Israel against an enemy.
3. Isaiah 40-55, the prophet of deliverance.
4. Haggai, the prophet of practical accomplishment.
5. Zechariah, the prophet of spiritual preparation for the temple.

6. Malachi, the prophet of whole-hearted worship.
7. Isaiah 56-66, the prophet of Jerusalem's future.
- IV. Prophets of the Age of Legalism. 1
 1. Joel, the prophet of the day of Jehovah.
 2. Jonah, the prophet of God's compassion.
 3. Daniel, the prophet of comfort in persecution.

Home Readings.—The following selections are suggested for the daily reading of Scripture, during the week of review: (1) Ezekiel 18: 1-24; (2) Isaiah 52: 13-53: 12; (3) Zechariah 5; (4) Malachi 3: 1-12; (5) Isaiah 59; (6) Jonah 4; (7) Daniel 12.

III. POINTS FOR REVIEW IN CLASS

NOTE.—A selection may be made from the following questions, or, if time permits, two weeks may profitably be devoted to this final review, some of the topics, suggested below, and other topics, that have arisen, being assigned to individuals for written discussion.

Names of the prophets of exile and restoration, of age of legalism; length of period from Ezekiel to Daniel; sharp change in work of prophets brought about by the exile, and the reason for it; the prophets who especially labored for Israel's formal religion; indication of Ezekiel's breadth of nature; the function of Obadiah; personality of the author of Isaiah 40-55; the supplementary personalities of Haggai and Zechariah (compare the way in which Amos and Hosea supplemented each other); the attractive element in Malachi's nature; the personality behind Isaiah 56-66; Joel and the age of Jewish exclusiveness; the spirit of the author of Jonah; the personality of the author of Daniel; external influences upon Israel from time of Ezekiel to writing of Daniel; work of the prophets in shaping Levitical tendencies of Judaism; the advance in moral and spiritual teaching that is due to Ezekiel; the supreme thought given to the world by the servant passages; the breadth of thought in Malachi; the gospel message of Jonah; the domi-

nant note of prophecy in times of darkness; the firm foundation on which the prophetic hopes ever rested; what is the fundamental element in all the moral and spiritual teaching of the prophets? is Christ's fulfilment of prophecy to be found chiefly by searching for agreements between detailed predictions and events in his outer life or by recognizing his perfect realization of all that the prophets had taught as to the nature of God and the duty and destiny of man? if we adopt the latter view, is prophecy more or less helpful to faith in Christ than it was on the former view?

APPENDIX

BOOKS OF REFERENCE

The standard Biblical introductions and dictionary articles furnish concise discussions of the historical and literary questions that may arise in connection with each book. For a general introduction to the entire Bible that of Bennett and Adeney (Thomas Whittaker, New York), will be found the most convenient. Driver's Introduction to the Old Testament (Scribner's, New York), discusses problems of Old Testament criticism much more thoroughly than the foregoing, and is a work of remarkably judicial temper. In Kautzsch's Literature of the Old Testament (G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York), and Bennett's Primer of the Bible (Henry Holt & Co., New York), attractive discussions of the growth of Old Testament literature will be found. The articles on the several prophets in Hastings' Bible Dictionary are usually very satisfactory. This work must largely replace the once excellent Smith's Bible Dictionary. The articles on the prophets in the ninth edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica are still very helpful.

Vivid presentations of the prophets in connection with the history of their times will be found in The Prophets of Israel, by C. H. Cornill (Open Court Publishing Co., Chicago); The Prophets of Israel, by W. Robertson Smith (D. Appleton & Co., New York), (eighth century prophets only), and in the Men of the Bible series, volumes on Isaiah, by S. R. Driver; Jeremiah, by T. K.

Cheyne; Minor Prophets, by F. W. Farrar; Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, by Marcus Dods (A. D. F. Randolph, New York).

For the interpretation of individual passages, reference should be made to the modern commentaries. Of these the following may be mentioned as helpful: Expositor's Bible (A. C. Armstrong & Son, New York)—Isaiah (2 vols.), The Book of the Twelve (2 vols.), by George Adam Smith, Jeremiah, by W. H. Bennett, Ezekiel, by John Skinner; Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges—Isaiah (2 vols.), by John Skinner, Hosea, Micah, by T. K. Cheyne, Ezekiel, by A. B. Davidson, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, by A. B. Davidson, Daniel, Joel, Amos, by S. R. Driver. In the Messages of the Bible series, by Sanders and Kent (Scribner's, New York), the volumes on the Earlier Prophets and the Later Prophets, furnish a popular introduction and interpretation that will often be found most illuminating.

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